

WHAT IS PHRAGMITES?

Phragmites australis is a type of perennial reed grass commonly found in wetlands, field edges, and along shorelines. Individual stems are tall (1–5m) and have large flowering seed heads and long slender leaves.

There are two sub-species in Canada: the native *Phragmites australis ssp. americanus* and the highly invasive *Phragmites australis ssp. australis* (aka. Common Reed), native to Eurasia.



INVASIVE PHRAGMITES WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

- When invasive Phragmites invades, it establishes rapidly and forms tall, dense mono-cultures that outcompete native plant species and reduce food and habitat for various wildlife species.
- Stands of invasive Phragmites have dense underground rhizome structures that propagate new plants, and large seed heads which make removing/managing the plant very difficult.

INVASIVE PHRAGMITES

IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



Common look-alikes to Phragmites



Brome • RMBL.org

Miscanthus • Bill Johnson

Reed Canary • Richard Old

BROME GRASSES (*Bromus spp.*)

- Much **smaller** than Phragmites (60–120 cm), with similar shaped flowerheads
- Stems are not rigid or tough, and break easily

MISCANTHUS GRASSES (aka Silvergrass)

- **Silver/white coloured, fine textured** flowerheads that lean to one side
- Similar height to Phragmites, grows in similar monocultures

REED CANARY GRASS (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

- Much smaller than Phragmites (60–120 cm), with less leaves and a more pronounced stem
- **Long, slender** flowerheads that are dense and unbranched

REPORT INVASIVE PHRAGMITES!



Think you've spotted invasive Phragmites in New Brunswick? We want to know!

Report your invasive Phragmites observations through the **iNaturalist mobile app** or online at www.inaturalist.ca. Make sure to take photos of the whole plant and other ID features to add to your observations!

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS



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INVASIVE VS. NATIVE

(*Phragmites australis ssp. australis*)

(*Phragmites australis ssp. americanus*)

How to differentiate between invasive and native Phragmites



NATIVE PHRAGMITES

(Phragmites australis ssp. americanus)



INVASIVE PHRAGMITES

(Phragmites australis ssp. australis)

STAND CHARACTERISTICS

Grows between 1–3.5 m (5–12 feet), and is generally smaller than invasive Phragmites in size. Stem density is typically low, allowing for a mix of plant species within patches, though high density patches may occur. Some dead stands may be visible, but likely not as abundant.



HEIGHT & DENSITY



Can grow up to 3–5 m (12–15 feet), but has been found in smaller heights in NB of 2–4 m (7–12 feet). Typically forms dense monocultures along roadways and fields, with little to no native plants intermixed. Live and dead Phragmites stems may be intermixed, as the rigidity of stems allow dead plant stems to persist through winter.

Stand appears dark green early in the growing season. Turns a lighter yellow-green colour as early as mid-August as it begins to die off earlier than the invasive species.

COLOUR & PHENOLOGY

« Photo: Leslie Mehrhoff »

Stand is a dark blue/green colour throughout growing season, and stays this colour later into summer compared to the native species. Can remain green after early frosts.

CLOSE UP CHARACTERISTICS

Flower heads are large and branched, but appear less dense and full. Can see individual branches on seed head. Seed head appears dark brown and turns a lighter brown throughout growing season.



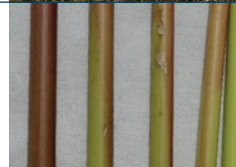
FLOWER HEADS

« Photo: Katy Chayka »



Flower heads are very large and fluffy, and are more branched and dense than native seed heads. Seed heads are a dark brown to light brown colour, and keep their colour longer through the growing season.

Stems are glossy and smooth, and appear red in the lower half of the plant.



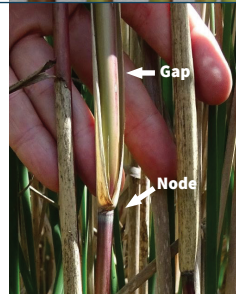
STEM COLOUR/TEXTURE

« Photos: Dr. Julia Bohlen »



Stems are more dull and rough, and appear a more solid green colour throughout.

Stem sheaths (casing around stem) will be dry and loose, and fall off the stem easily allowing for gaps. You will be able to see and feel solid “nodes” under this sheath, like joints along the stem.



STEM SHEATHS/ NODES

« Photos: Dr. Julia Bohlen »



Stem sheaths are tightly adhered to the stem, and have sharp, rough edges. It will be difficult to see/feel individual “nodes” throughout the stem due to the more rigid and tight stem sheath.