

## Non-native subspecies of Phragmites (Common Reed) (*Phragmites australis* subsp. *australis*)



Non-native *Phragmites* subspecies on the left, native *Phragmites* subspecies on the right. Photo by Mary Meyer, U of MN.



Stand of non-native *Phragmites*. Photo by S. Kelly Kearns.

### Description:

**Appearance:** *Phragmites australis* subsp. *australis* is a non-native subspecies of common reed. The native common reed is *Phragmites australis* subsp. *americanus*. Both subspecies are perennial wetland grasses and both are present in Minnesota. The invasive subspecies can grow over 12 feet high in dense stands.

**Leaf blades:** Stems of native subspecies are smooth, stems of invasive subspecies are ribbed. Leaf sheath of the native is easy to remove or falls off; invasive is difficult to remove.

**Flowers:** Flower head of native species is sparse, flower head of invasive subspecies is dense.

**Roots:** Deep and dense network of roots and rhizomes.

**For help distinguishing native vs invasive Phragmites see: [Mistaken Identity - Invasive Plants and their Native Look-Alikes](#) [PDF](#) or [Cornell University](#).**

### Ecological Threat:

- Invades lake shores, wetlands, rivers, and roadsides.
- Mixed wetland communities are replaced by near monocultures of invasive

Phragmites/common reed causing changes in ecosystem processes (hydrology, nutrient cycles) and negative impacts on native plants and wildlife.

## Control Methods:

**Mechanical:** Mowing 3-5 times during the growing season can decrease the density of Phragmites.

**Chemical:** Herbicides such as glyphosate (Rodeo) can be effective. Be sure to use herbicides approved for use near water. Follow-up with a burn in late fall for additional control.

Note that control of emergent vegetation on public waters requires a **permit**.

## Native Substitutes:

- **Bluejoint** (*Calamagrostis canadensis*)
- **Lake sedge** (*Carex lacustris*)
- **Rattlesnake grass** (*Glyceria canadensis*)
- **Prairie cordgrass** (*Spartina pectinata*)

## Additional Resources

- To distinguish invasive Phragmites from native Phragmites **Mistaken Identity - Invasive Plants and their Native Look-Alikes** [PDF](#)
- **US Forest Service Fact Sheet** [PDF](#)
- **Invasive Phragmites Best Management Practices** [PDF](#) - Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- **Phragmites information** - Cornell University