

Phragmites (Invasive)

Phragmites australis

Description

This species has been listed as a restricted species under Michigan law; forms dense, impenetrable stands.

Habit

Stout, warm-season perennial grass ranging in height from 1.8-3.9 m (6-13 ft).

Leaves

Flat, smooth leaf blades; 25-50 cm (10-20 in) long, 1-3.5 cm (0.4-1.4 in) wide, hairy ligules, green to grayish-green in color.

Stems

Upright; rigid and hollow; persisting in winter.

Flowers

Dense branched clusters on bearded axis at the end of each stem, becoming open and feathery





at maturity.

Fruits and Seeds

Seeds with white hairs below that are almost as long as the seed; prolific seeder but seed is not always viable.

Habitat

Native to North America and found around the world; aggressive strains are thought to be of exotic or hybrid origin. Found in wetlands, ditches, swales, stream and pond banks. For information on distinguishing between native and exotic strains, check the Online Resources section in the back of this field guide.

Reproduction

Contrary to earlier beliefs, spreads easily and extensively by seed; also by an extensive, aggressive system of horizontal and vertical rhizomes that can live for 3-6 years.

Similar

Phragmites is distinctive and much taller than most other grasses, particularly the non-native form. Wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*), though quite tall, lacks the feathery appearance; large non-flowering plants of reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) appear similar but lack hairy ligules.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Monitor wetlands, ditches and moist sites, particularly adjacent to areas which receive nutrient rich run-off or road salt. Burning, mowing, discing and digging may stimulate populations. Foliar herbicide treatment in late summer or fall provides effective control for large dense stands. Cutting earlier in the season may facilitate spraying. Flooding cut Phragmites stems with at least 1 m (3 ft) of water for 4

months during the growing season may also provide control. Permits may be required for herbicide use in water and wetlands. For information see MDEQs Aquatic Nuisance Control website at: www.michigan.gov/deqinlandlakes.

Credits

The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) has partnered with MISIN to provide the information in this fact sheet. Species images and/or information were used with permission from "A Field Identification Guide to Invasive Plants in Michigan's Natural Communities" and "A Field Guide to Invasive Plants of Aquatic and Wetland Habitats for Michigan."