

Invasive Phragmites

(*Phragmites australis subsp. australis*)



Invasive Phragmites growing next to a highway.
Photo courtesy of Francine MacDonald, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

Invasive Phragmites (European Common Reed) is an invasive plant causing damage to Ontario's biodiversity, wetlands and beaches. Invasive Phragmites is a perennial grass that has been damaging ecosystems in Ontario for decades. It is not clear how it was transported to North America from its native home in Eurasia.

Invasive Phragmites is an aggressive plant that spreads quickly and out-competes native species for water and nutrients. It releases toxins from its roots into the soil to hinder the growth of and kill surrounding plants. While it prefers areas of standing water, its roots can grow to extreme lengths, allowing it to survive in relatively dry areas.

Impacts of Invasive Phragmites

Invasive Phragmites:

- crowds out native vegetation, thus resulting in decreased plant biodiversity;
- generally provides poor habitat and food supplies for wildlife, including several Species at Risk;
- grows very quickly thereby causing lower water levels as water is transpired faster than it would be with native vegetation;
- increases fire hazards as stands are composed of a high percentage of dead stalks; and
- can affect agriculture, cause road safety hazard and impact recreational activities such as swimming, boating and angling.



Identifying Invasive Phragmites.
Photo courtesy of J.M. Gilbert, MNR.