



Controlling Phragmites

What is *Phragmites*?

Phragmites australis (European Common Reed) is an invasive perennial grass that is threatening Southern Ontario's wetlands and beaches. It is also commonly found in disturbed sites such as road side ditches.

Phragmites is one of Ontario's most aggressive invasive plants due to its ability to develop and expand quickly. *Phragmites* out competes native plant species for space, water, and nutrients. It also directly attacks native species by secreting toxins from its roots into the surrounding soil.

What does it look like?

This invasive grass can grow vertically 4 cm per day and can reach heights of 5 m. It creates stands so dense that there can be as many as 200 stems per square metre. Stems are tan or beige in colour with blue-green leaves and large seed heads which are red in colour.



Large, brown-red seed heads



Blue-green coloured leaves



Rough and dull stem with ridges



Tan/beige stems

How do I get rid of *Phragmites*?

Determine How Much You Have

It is important to know what you are dealing with. How big, and how dense is the stand you are hoping to remove? For example, removing a dense stand approximately 50 m² could take several hours with a gas-powered trimmer!

Gather the Materials

- Gardening gloves
- Chest waders
- Wheelbarrow
- Tarp
- Rope
- Truck/trailer
- Heavy-soled shoes
- Trimmers

Trimmers can be manual or gas powered. Gas powered trimmers have a long-handled pruning extension with serrated blades. When using a gas powered trimmer under water, be sure to oil blades with natural oil that will not contaminate water. Use olive or canola oil instead of WD40.

Safely & Effectively Remove

When? In August. This is when most of the plants energy is out of the roots and being used for flower and seed production. Removal during this time period also protects any nesting birds. If you do encounter any nesting birds, all work must be stopped.

Using a handheld or gas powered trimmer, cut as close to the ground as possible on land and in water. Over time and with repeated cuttings over several years this will cause the roots to weaken and eventually the plant will die.

Pile cut stalks on tarps to dry for 1-2 weeks. Turn piles regularly to ensure all stalks are dried out.

Properly Dispose of the Waste

Call your local waste facility to make sure they accept *Phragmites*, and discuss the drop off process and fees.

Load cuttings into a trailer or truck bed and tarp it down so that no fragments are able to fly out during transportation. This is essential as *Phragmites* can reestablish from a single stalk fragment or seed!

When you arrive at the landfill site, tell the attendant that you have *Phragmites* or Common Reed Grass and they should direct you to the appropriate receptacle.

What NOT to do!

1. **Do NOT apply herbicides!** There are currently no herbicides approved for over-water application. Contact your local Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry office for more information on herbicide application processes for dry land.
2. **Do NOT use heavy machinery like back hoes!** This is very destructive to sensitive shoreline habitat and will also require a permit from your local conservation authority.
3. **Do NOT remove native vegetation!** This vegetation provides habitat and food for many species, and increases biodiversity.
4. **Do NOT place in your backyard composter!** Temperatures in backyard composters are not hot enough to destroy *Phragmites* seeds.
5. **Do NOT disturb the roots!** This could cause roots to become distressed, resulting in more "runners" being sent out.

Native Vegetation

It is important to have a buffer of native vegetation along the shoreline! This buffer plays a crucial role in aquatic ecosystems by filtering runoff from the surrounding landscape before it enters our waterways. It helps with bank stabilization, flood control, Canada Geese management and also provides habitat and food for wildlife!



Wild Rice

Dave Featherstone, NVCA



Cattail

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typha>



Blue Flag Iris

<https://thesquirrelnetwork.wordpress.com/2013/05/29/>



Soft Stem Bulrush

<http://www.silverplains.ca/flora/rushes-sedges/softstem-bulrush.html>



Bur-reed

Ronald Orenstein



Canada Blue Joint

http://www.itascawood.org/photo_gallery/photo_gallery.htm

Native vegetation is used by many species at different stages of their life. It is important to keep wetland habitat for fish spawning, breeding amphibians and nesting birds!



It's not a Sprint, it's a Marathon!

Cutting *Phragmites* stands needs to be repeated for several years, and results may vary. These photos were taken at Lighthouse Point in Collingwood over 3 years. The combination of continued cutting and increased water circulation has shown a positive result.



2013



2014



2015



How can you help reduce the spread of invasive species?

- Learn to identify invasive species. Early detection is very important in the management process.
- Try gardening with native species. If that is not an option, be sure to ask garden centres about non-invasive plants.
- Stay on designated trails. Be sure to clean off clothing and any equipment after being in an area that may have invasive species.
- Use boot brush stations to remove foreign material including seeds that can be stuck on your shoes before and after your adventure into the forest.
- Properly bag and dispose of invasive species at your local landfill.
- Properly inspect and clean equipment and vehicles when on dirt clods, plant materials or when moving from one area to another.
- [Download the Clean Equipment Protocol from the Ontario Invasive Plant Council.](#)
- Check species origins at invasiveplantatlas.org

Report invasive species!

- Ontario Invasive Species Program: invadingspecies.com
- Ontario Invasive Plant Council: ontarioinvasiveplants.ca



Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

8195 8th Line
Utopia, ON, L0M 1T0
705-424-1479
admin@nvca.on.ca
nvca.on.ca



**West
Collingwood
Shoreline**

**Community
Phragmites
Action Plan**



**GEORGIAN BAY
FOREVER**

Protecting your water.



This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Contact the NVCA if you require this document in an alternative format.