



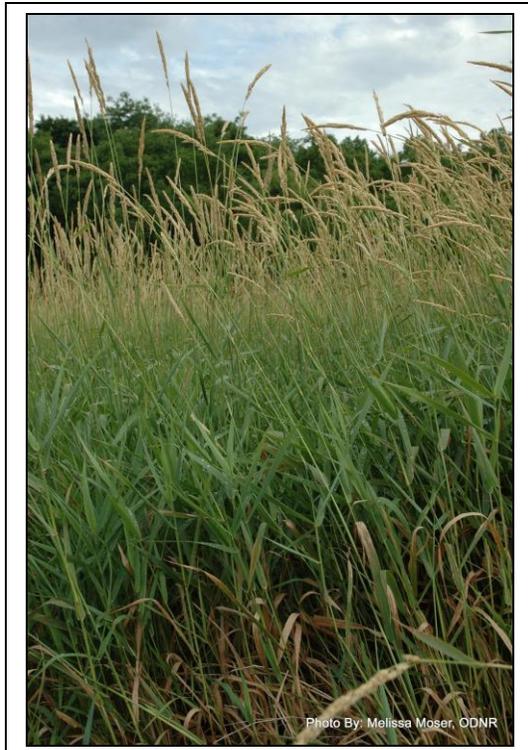
# INVASIVE PLANTS OF OHIO

## Fact Sheet 6

## Reed Canary Grass

*Phalaris arundinacea*

### DESCRIPTION:



Reed canary grass is a large, coarse grass that attains a height of 2 to 7 feet. The erect, hairless stem supports rough-textured, tapering leaves of 3 ½ to 10 inches long and 1/4 to 3/4 inch wide. One of the first grasses to sprout in the spring, reed canary grass produces compact panicles that are erect or slightly spreading and range from 3 to 16 inches long. Flowers occur in dense clusters in May to mid-June. They are green to purple at first and change to beige over time. Shiny brown seeds ripen in late June and are dispersed by water, animals, humans and machines. This grass forms a thick rhizome system that quickly dominates a site.

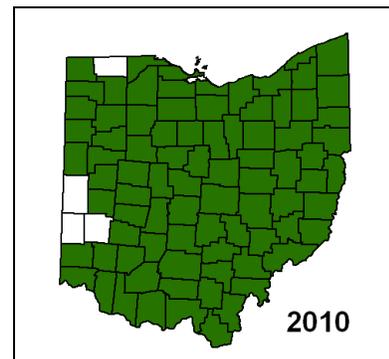
Sources document native and non-native genotypes. The non-native strain is more invasive than the native strain. The non-native originates in temperate regions of Europe and Asia. Both strains have been planted throughout the U.S. since the 1800s for forage and erosion control.

### HABITAT:

Reed canary grass grows best on fertile, moist organic soils in full sun. It can grow in standing water by producing special roots along the submersed portion of the stem. It also grows on dry soils in upland sites and under partial shade.

### INVASIVE CHARACTERISTICS:

Reed canary grass reproduces prolifically vegetatively as well as by seed. This species can invade most types of wetlands, including marshes, wet prairies, sedge meadows, fens, stream and river banks, ditches and seasonally wet areas; it also grows in disturbed upland areas. Stands are difficult to eradicate because large seed banks and extensive root systems allow its re-colonization of sites.





## **CONTROL:**

### Mechanical:

Hand-pulling can be effective for small populations. Care must be taken to remove the entire plant, including the roots; all plant materials should be bagged and taken off-site. Removal is recommended as plants can continue to mature and produce seeds even after they are pulled. Small patches can also be covered with black plastic for at least one growing season.

Plants can also be cut or mowed, but repeated cutting or mowing is usually needed for effective control. Discing or plowing can be used to control a well-established population, although this method basically reduces the density without killing the plants.

### Chemical:

Foliar application of systemic herbicides such as AquaNeat, Accord, and Rodeo (approved for wetland/aquatic application) can be very effective, especially if applied in the early spring or late fall when other native vegetation is dormant (to minimize impacts on native plants). The most effective treatment time occurs after flowering/seed set and before the plant goes dormant for the winter. To be most effective, many herbicides require a penetrating or sticking agent such as Nu-Film-P; be sure to use a non-ionic surfactant in wet areas. Removal of the previous year's growth to expose the new green shoots increases the effectiveness of the herbicide. In the fall, herbicide can be applied after mowing reed canary grass.



### Biological:

There are no biological control methods currently known for reed canary grass.

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### **Credits and additional information:**

Plant Conservation Alliance-Alien Plant Working Group  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources, [www.ohiodnr.gov](http://www.ohiodnr.gov)  
The Nature Conservancy, Ohio Chapter  
USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Staff, Newtown Square, PA  
OIPC website, [www.oipc.info](http://www.oipc.info)

**Note: Map of species' range is based on records as of 2010.**