

COMMON REED

(PHRAGMITES AUSTRALIS)

2019 Status in Maine:

Widespread. Severely invasive. Perennial tall grass (up to 13') growing in dense stands. Originates from Europe.

Identify

Leaves: Alternate, entire, yellow-green. Widest in the middle and taper to a pointed tip.

Fruit: Seed head appears fluffy and starts as a brown-purple color in late summer, maturing to light tan in the fall and persisting through the winter.

Stem: The stem is round and hollow with nodes where the leaves connect. Dead stalks may stay through winter.

Location

This plant is found in wetlands and wet ditches. Especially damaging to saltmarshes and freshwater marshes. Frequently grows in roadside ditches and swales.

Parks of concern: Greenbelt, Yerxa Park

Problem

It is very aggressive and grows rapidly, forming monocultures that out-compete native wetland plants. Tolerant of a wide variety of environmental conditions.

How it spreads: Seeds are wind dispersed. Also spreads from fragments of roots that can be dispersed by water.

Management

Small colonies can be cut, but this must be done repeatedly during the growing season for several years as the plant can re-sprout. Care should be taken to dry or burn all plant parts before disposal. Larger stands can be difficult or near impossible to control without persistent, reliable labor force.

