

THIS INVASIVE PLANT GROWS  
WIDELY ALONG ROADSIDES  
AND IN WETLANDS

# PHRAGMITES

Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*), or common reed grass, is an invasive terrestrial plant. Phragmites was introduced from Europe by the dumping of ballast from ships along the coastal ports. It is now widespread in the south end of the Lake George watershed and throughout Warren County. Phragmites has been used for food, to make mats and baskets, and for bioremediation of waste materials. However, the ecological implications far outweigh its usefulness. The invasive forces out other plants to the point that it is the only plant left in the community. Phragmites can also produce high levels of tannin, which can alter water quality and affect macroinvertebrates, fish, and amphibians. Additionally, it offers little nutritional value for wildlife and clogs waterways, altering the flow of streams and wetlands.

Phragmites is a tall perennial grass with featherlike plumes, hollow stems and stiff wide leaves. It can



Phragmites have overwhelmed many roadside areas and wetlands in the south basin of Lake George and other areas nearby .

grow up to 6 meters high in dense stands and is long lived. It flowers and produces seeds between July and September, but it mainly reproduces via rhizomes. Phragmites prefers disturbed areas with

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po box 352, lake george, ny 12845 · (518) 668-9700  
info@fundforlakegeorge.org  
fundforlakegeorge.org



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po box 591, lake george, ny 12845 · (518) 668-5913  
info@lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org  
lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org

# Phragmites

degraded soils like ditches, dredged areas, open riparian zones, altered wetlands, disturbed shorelines and disturbed stream corridors. It can grow in freshwater and saltwater environments sometimes forming floating mats.

It is important to note that there is a native form of phragmites. Genetically the two are different, but there are some physical features that can help distinguish between the two. Native forms generally appear to grow in small groups or individually compared to large expanses formed by the invasive form that pushes out other species. Invasive and native phragmites may also differ in color, and how quickly they spread. Invasive phragmites spreads horizontally by sending out rhizome runners, which can grow 10 feet or more in a single growing season.

Phragmites can be managed, but it takes a considerable amount of time and money. Herbicide use by a professional applicator or long-term management of cutting and treating stems are the most effective method of removal. Prevention measures should be taken to avoid infesting new locations because it can be easily spread by any activities that disperse seeds or rhizome fragments of the plant.



The best control known for phragmites is a chemical treatment by a licensed applicator.

As with many other invasive species, stopping the spread is critical as removal is costly. Here are tips to stop the spread of the invasive species phragmites:

- Landscape with native plants;
- Do not compost terrestrial invasive plants;
- Clean tread and tires of vehicles, boats and trailers, gear and equipment;
- Remove invasive plants from your property by utilizing BMP's;
- Maintain a adequate buffer along streams and shorelines;
- Do not degraded soils by clear cutting or dredging; and,
- Know the source of your mulch, topsoil or fill.

**We need your help to protect Lake George from invasive species.**

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