

Phragmites Educational Guide

What Is Phragmites?

Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*), commonly known as Common Reed, is one of the most aggressive invasive wetland grasses in the Mid-Atlantic. Mature plants commonly reach 13–18 feet tall with thick hollow stems, blue-green leaves, and feathery seed heads that remain visible through winter. Dense colonies quickly dominate wetlands, shorelines, stormwater ponds, drainage ditches, and retention basins, making early identification important.

Native vs. Invasive Forms

North America contains both native and invasive forms. Native Phragmites naturally occurs in scattered wetland communities and provides habitat for wildlife without overwhelming surrounding vegetation. The invasive European strain grows faster, develops massive underground rhizome systems, and forms dense stands that crowd out native plants, reduce biodiversity, and dramatically change wetland ecosystems.

How Phragmites Spreads

Phragmites spreads primarily through underground rhizomes that continually produce new shoots. Small root fragments transported by equipment, soil movement, or flooding can establish entirely new colonies. Mature plants also produce thousands of seeds that may be carried by wind or water. Because colonies expand outward each growing season, infestations often become much larger than they first appear.

Why It Is a Problem

Invasive Phragmites blocks sunlight from reaching native vegetation, reducing plant diversity and wildlife habitat. Dense growth restricts water flow, limits access around ponds and drainage systems, creates heavy accumulations of dry plant material that increase fire risk, and can reduce the overall ecological health and appearance of commercial and municipal properties.

Benefits of Early Action

Managing Phragmites before colonies become established is more cost-effective and increases the likelihood of restoring healthy native vegetation. Early action also reduces long-term maintenance requirements, limits the spread to neighboring properties, and helps preserve valuable wetland habitat.

The Chesapeake Natural Solutions Bio-D Approach

Chesapeake Natural Solutions focuses on restoring ecological balance through the Bio-D product line. Bio-D SP is incorporated to stimulate beneficial microbial activity and improve long-term soil biology, while Bio-D SC supports biological activity in stressed sites during restoration. Our programs are designed to improve soil health, encourage the recovery of desirable vegetation, and promote resilient ecosystems using science-based biological solutions tailored to each property's conditions.

Why Choose Chesapeake Natural Solutions?

Our team provides customized biological vegetation management programs for commercial properties, HOAs, municipalities, golf courses, horse farms, campgrounds, industrial facilities, and large private estates throughout Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Every property evaluation is tailored to its unique environmental conditions and long-term management goals.