

Fact Sheet: Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

SPOT IT: How to Identify

- **Form & Stems:** Tall perennial grass (over 6 feet). Stems are hairless, hollow, smooth, and rounded with a prominent, transparent ligule at the leaf junction.
 - **Leaves & Seeds:** Rough-textured, flat, tapering blades (1/4 to 1/3 inches wide). Seeds are shiny brown and germinate immediately.
 - **Flowers & Bloom:** Green to purple seed heads (3 to 16 inches long) that turn beige/tan as they age. Blooms May to mid-June.
 - **Roots & Habitat:** Thick, underground fibrous rhizomatous mats. Thrives in full sun and wet areas; tolerates shade, drought, flooding, and cold down to -38°F.
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THE THREAT: Why It Must Go

- **Chokes Out Vegetation:** Dense rhizome mats physically restrict other species. It emerges early in spring, rapidly shading out native plants and quickly creating aggressive single-species monocultures.
 - **Prevents Reforestation:** Its choked growth makes the natural re-establishment of trees incredibly difficult in affected areas.
 - **Massive Seedbanks & Resilience:** Deposits a high volume of resilient seeds into the soil, creating a persistent seedbank that allows the plant to return year after year.
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How to Properly Eradicate

Strategy: Because of its massive seedbanks, mechanical and chemical methods must be used in tandem for successful eradication.

Mechanical & Cultural Control

- **Hand Pulling & Digging:** Effective only for small, isolated patches. Dig deeply to extract all rhizome roots to prevent resprouting.
- **Mowing & Burning:** For large areas, mow or perform a controlled burn in early spring. This clears mature thatch and forces vulnerable new growth.

Chemical Control

- **Non-Selective (Spot Treatment):** Apply broad-spectrum Glyphosate or Imazapyr directly to new growth after mowing/burning. *Note: Use aquatic-approved formulas if working near wetlands.*
- **Selective (Grass-Specific):** Systemic herbicides like Clethodim or Sethoxydim target the grass without harming broadleaf plants, though repeat applications are necessary.

CAUTION: Always follow the pesticide label instructions exactly. The label is the law.

Sources & Further Reading

- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. (2022). *Reed Canary Grass (Phalaris arundinacea) Management Guide*. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/Reed%20Canary%20Grass%20Management%20Guide_0.pdf
- Purdue University Extension. 2025. "Learn How to Control Reed Canarygrass." Purdue University Forestry and Natural Resources. December 8, 2025. <https://www.purdue.edu/fnr/extension/learn-how-to-control-reed-canarygrass/>.

