SEVERELY INVASIVE

REED CANARY GRASS

Phalaris arundinacea

Status in Maine: widespread

Description: Robust, perennial grass, 2-6' tall, commonly to 4'. **Leaves:** Alternate, ⅓-¾" wide, and 4-8" long, gradually tapering to a point. Leaves are flat, with a rough texture, and come off the stem at a 45-degree angle. Transparent, ~¼" ligule occurs where the leaf sheath meets the stem. **Flowers/seeds:** 3-8" long inflorescences are formed high above the leaves. They begin as slender spikes in early summer, and become somewhat open-spreading when flowering. Color changes from green to purplish to tan as seeds mature. **Stem:** Hairless, sometimes hollow, ~⅓" diameter. **Root:** Sturdy, creeping rhizomes.

Native range: There are native ecotypes of this grass in North America, but the invasive strain is of Eurasian origin. **How arrived in U.S.:** Planted for forage and erosion control on wet pastures and fields. There are also ornamental varieties including one with white-stiped leaves which occasionally naturalizes.

Reproduction: Spreads by seed and vegetatively by rhizomes. Seeds are likely spread via movement of water.

Habitat: Stream and river banks, lakeshores, marshes, ditches, and roadsides. Found in wet soils but not usually in standing water. Only moderately shade tolerant; prefers full sun.

Similar native species: It is not possible to separate the native and non-native strains of reed canary grass without

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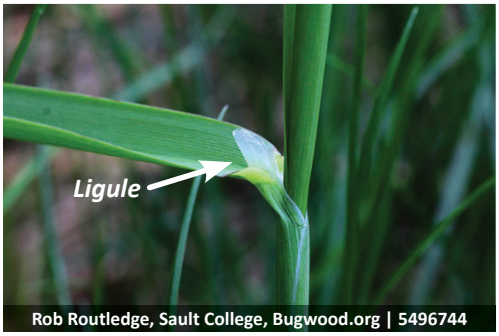
molecular techniques, however the invasive strain grows aggressively in areas with a history of human disturbance, forming large stands. Canada bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*) is similar and often grows in dense stands in wetland habitats. It has narrower inflorescences, leaves, and stems than reed canary grass.

Similar non-native species: Orchard grass (*Dactylis glomerata*) has narrower leaves (⅛-⅓" wide) and grows in tufts or small clusters as opposed to the spreading habit of reed canary grass.

Control methods: Hand pulling or digging is only practical for small patches. For larger infestations, mowing, if possible, can reduce or eliminate seed production and perhaps lower density over time. Prolonged flooding can kill reed canary grass, but may also kill desirable vegetation if present. Fire can be successfully used to remove the dense reed canary grass litter/thatch build-up. Litter build-up can prevent native species from establishing in areas previously dominated by reed canary grass, so even if treatments to kill the grass are successful, additional work may be needed to achieve a desired condition. Aquatic formulations of glyphosate are somewhat effective, but follow-up will be required, including repeat applications in many cases. ***Special rules apply to herbicide use in or near wetlands and waterbodies - see the section in the back of this guide titled "Use of Herbicides to Control Invasive Plants in or Near Wetlands and Waterbodies."***



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