

Reed canary grass

Phalaris arundinacea



Identification

- Tall perennial grass that grows to 2 m with long creeping rhizomes
- Leaf blades are flat, up to 400 x 20 mm, and often harsh on both surfaces
- Spreading flower/seed panicles arise from hairless stems and can be green, purple, or brown
- Seeds are shiny brown



Reed canary grass Photo: C. Howell (DOC)



Close up of reed canary grass leaf/stem Photo: Jon Sullivan

Where is it found?

Reed canary grass grows best on fertile and moist or wet soils. It is tolerant of freezing conditions and has been found in home gardens and ponds in Canterbury. The variegated form, *P. arundinacea* var *picta* L. with cream-striped leaves, is cultivated as an ornamental and has escaped in many places.

Why is it a problem?

It is a major threat to marshes and wetlands because it can replace native species. Reed canary grass is very hardy, grows quickly and spreads easily both by seed and by creeping rhizomes. It is difficult to eradicate once established.

What can you do?

If you are not sure you can identify it yourself, a grass specialist or the experts at the LandCare Research herbarium can help to check the plant. Single plants or small infestations can be physically removed. For larger areas, cutting several times a year may be effective. In some situations glyphosate herbicide may work, but several applications will be needed. Use all herbicides in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and ensure no herbicide comes into contact with other plants, the soil or waterways.



Reed canary grass seedheads Photo: Jon Sullivan