

Common Name: Reed canarygrass

Scientific Name: *Phalaris arundinacea*
L.

Family: Grass family (Poaceae)

Similar Species: Orchard grass
(*Dactylis glomerata*)

Description: Stout reed-like perennial from stout rhizomes, stems hollow, 2-6 feet tall with bluish-green waxy coating. Leaf blades flat, 1/4 to 3/4 inch wide. **claspig ligules** Leaves rough, sheaths open. Inflorescence a panicle 6-18 cm. long with spikelets occurring in clusters on short scabrous branches, reddish to purplish at base, becoming straw colored, compact at first then opening at maturity.

Photo: Weed Science Society of America



Life History: Highly variable species. Perennial, prefers moist to flooded sites. Does not tolerate saltwater. Tolerant of freezing temperatures, begins growing early in the season. Spreads within sites by creeping rhizomes, effectively excluding all other vegetation. Colonizes new sites by seeds.

Where Found: Roadsides, ditches, logging sites throughout southeast Alaska.

Habitat: Typically occurs in soils that are saturated or nearly saturated for most of the growing season, but where standing water does not persist for extended periods. Established stands can tolerate extended periods of inundation. Ideal conditions typically occur in roadside ditches, rights-of-way, river dikes and levees, shallow marshes, and meadows.

Impacts: Forms dense monospecific matted stands. Invades into wetlands and riparian areas. Growth of reed canary grass may slow stream flow, eliminating the scouring action needed for maintaining gravelly river bottoms essential for salmon reproduction. It was widely debated whether reed canarygrass is native to North America or not. It has been bred as a hay crop, and hay cultivars have probably interbred with wild or naturalized populations. It is frequently used in southeast Alaska to stabilize soil along roadsides and other disturbed sites. It may be a threat to wetland plant species due to its aggressive colonial habit. The species grows so vigorously that it is able to inhibit and eliminate competing species

Photo: Weed Science Society of America



Photo: © Barry Rice, The Nature Conservancy



Control Options: Small populations may be removed by digging but will have to be repeated over a period of several years. Reed canarygrass is very sensitive to tillage such as disking. Fire has been used effectively in wetlands to control reed canarygrass. Shading by emerging forests will eventually eliminate reed canarygrass.



Photo: ©John M Randall, The Nature Conservancy

Herbicide Options: Due to its affiliation with wetlands, due care

should be taken before treating with herbicides. Rodeo (a glyphosate formulation approved for use in wetlands) is most effective when applied in early spring or in September before first hard frost.

Illustration: NRCS PLANTS database

