

Reed Canary Grass *Phalaris arundinacea*

Description: Reed canary grass is a large, coarse grass that reaches 2 to 9 feet in height. It has an erect, hairless stem with gradually tapering leaf blades 3 1/2 to 10 inches long and 1/4 to 3/4 inch in width. Blades are flat and have a rough texture on both surfaces. The lead ligule is membranous and long. The compact panicles are erect or slightly spreading (depending on the plant's reproductive stage), and range from 3 to 16 inches long with branches 2 to 12 inches in length. Single flowers occur in dense clusters in May to mid-June. They are green to purple at first and change to beige over time. This grass is one of the first to sprout in spring, and forms a thick rhizome system that dominates the subsurface soil. Seeds are shiny brown in color.



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Control Methods:

1. Prescribed burning

Studies in the Midwest indicate that prescribed burning is effective in areas with an existing component of native plants, either above ground or in the soil seed bank. To be effective, burns should be conducted in the late spring, early to mid-summer, or early to mid-fall. Early spring burning stimulates the production of shoots.

2. Foliar Spray

Different chemicals have been used with some success. Best results have come from foliar spraying a chemical containing glyphosate.

Rodeo should be used because reed canary grass grows in an aquatic environment. Chemical treatment followed in two to three weeks by prescribed burning has been effective. The use of fire helps to ensure mortality by killing re-sprouts and germinants.

3. Mechanical treatment

Heavy equipment has been used unsuccessfully in reed canary grass removal. Rapid re-growth occurs from rhizomes and seeds that remain in the soil even after mechanical removal. Clipping back plants at ground level and covering them with opaque black plastic tarps can reduce but not eliminate populations; however, this method is not always effective because reed canary grass shoots can grow up through most materials. Seasonal inundation may also displace covering materials. Mowing may be a valuable control method, since it removes seed heads before seed maturation and exposes the ground to light, promoting the growth of native species. Studies in Wisconsin indicated that twice-yearly mowings led to increased numbers of native species in comparison to reed canary grass-infested plots that were not mowed.

