

# Phragmites

*Phragmites australis*

Family Poaceae



## Identification

- Perennial grass that can grow between 2 to 4 m tall and dies back over winter.
- The long, smooth, flat leaf blades can be up to 60 cm long.
- Leaf margins are rough and the leaf sheaths are overlapping.
- Stems are hollow.
- The flowers are produced in a dense, dark purple, feathery flowerhead (20-50 cm long).
- The ligule (the membrane on the inside of the leaf, at the point where the blade leaves the stem) has a fringe of long hairs.



Phragmites. Photo: C. Macann (ECan).



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## Where is it found?

Phragmites can be found growing on the margins of waterways and waterbodies. It can also tolerate slightly saline conditions. In the Canterbury region there are 4 known sites of Phragmites (3 in the Christchurch district and one in the Ashburton district).

## Why is it a problem?

Phragmites is a vigorous growing robust grass. It has the potential to form dense stands, excluding native vegetation and modifying the habitat of animals that live in waterway margins. Phragmites is primarily spread by broken rhizome (underground horizontal stem) fragments re-sprouting.

## Status

Phragmites is one of MAFBNZ's top 11 plants to work towards eradicating from New Zealand. It is also an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act, 1993; included in the National Plant Pest Accord and is listed as a Biodiversity plant in the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy. As an unwanted organism, it is illegal to knowingly release or spread, display or sell, breed, propagate or otherwise distribute this species.

## Have you seen it?

Phragmites can look very similar to other tall grasses. If you suspect you have found Phragmites, please contact Environment Canterbury or the Potential Pest Line on (03) 363 9380 immediately to confirm identification.



Phragmites that have died back in winter. Photo: P. Champion (NIWA).