Common reed/Phragmites australis

- Tall – to 13 ft., fast growing, perennial, cool season grass;
- Leaves along the stem, flat or sometimes rolled, 2 in. wide, to 2 ft. long;
- Inflorescences terminal, open panicles 6-16 in. tall;
- Reproduces sexually and asexually:
  - Produced male, female, and bisexual flowers,
  - Extensive runners (above ground) & rhizomes (below ground) - up 60 ft.,
    - nodes that root & sprout forming dense colonies,
    - forms dense root masses down to 8 feet,
    - Sections of runners/rhizomes fragment naturally or mechanically by humans/animals and disperse.

- Inflorescence
- (open panicle)
- Seed (with pappus bristles for wind dispersal)
- Leaves
- Flower
- Rhizome
  - shoots
  - node
  - rooting nodes

Distribution & Habitat

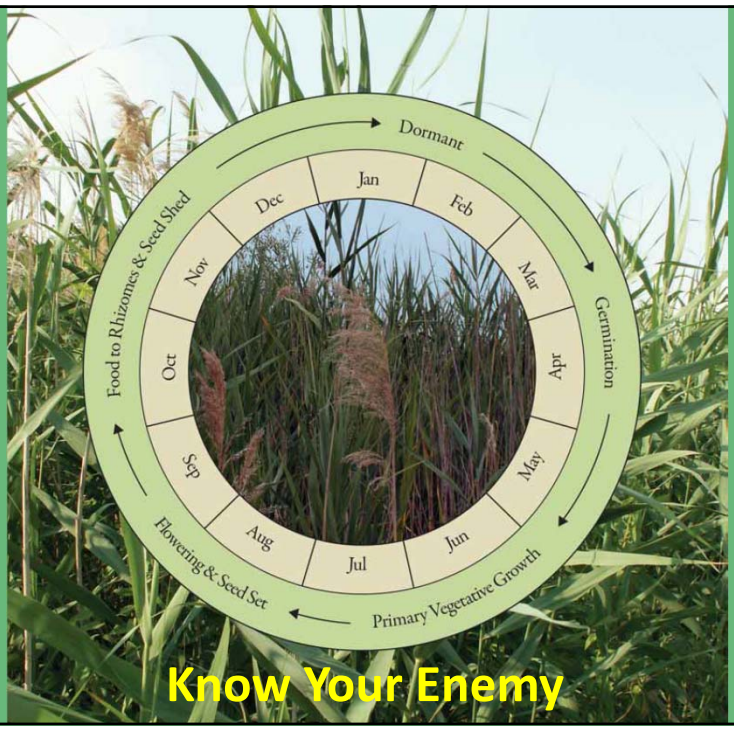
- Occurs extensively across the US, Canada, and into Central America;
- Habitat in wetlands, ditches, and moist places in both saline and fresh water, tidal and non-tidal wetlands, hypersaline playas, marshes, springs, seeps, riparian, and lacustrine habitats;
- Sea level to 7,000 ft. altitude;
- Wetland Indicator = FACW.

Phragmites Subspecies (ssp.)

- *P. australis* ssp. *americanus* – native throughout the US and Canada.
- *P. australis* ssp. *berlandieri* – native to Central America & into the Gulf region – questionable if it is native to the US or introduced.
- *P. australis* ssp. *australis* – introduced genetic strain from Europe.

Uses & Issues

- Used for building (thatch roof) and weaving material in both the Old and New world, as well as arrow shafts, flutes, mats, and rafts by aboriginal Americans.
- Seeds eaten by wildlife, used for escape cover, some nesting such as redwing blackbirds.
- Sugary sap can be boiled/reduced to make candy similar to maple sap.
- Native forms can form dense colonies but not as weedy as non-natives. Invasive subspecies:
  - crows out/replaces native vegetation & reduces species diversity,
  - alters hydrology,
  - increase fire potential,
  - alters wildlife habitat.



Know Your Enemy

Control

- Few treatments alone are effective in long term control and management.
- Multiple methods, multiple years, and follow-up are necessary.

Chemical
Glyphosate and/or Imazapyr

- Aerial, backpack, wick, hand swiping, stem injection. It all depends on the population size and distribution.
- Apply to actively growing green foliage after full leaf elongation and up to first killing frost (i.e., July up to first killing frost).
- If stand has substantial amount of old stem tissue, allow to regrow to approximately 5' tall before treatment.
- Following years follow-up with regrowth with re-treatment.
- (*caution – kills everything)

Mechanical
mowing, chopping, digging, hand removal

- Mechanical alone encourages spreading.
  - Encourages spread by rhizome regrowth, rhizome fragmentation and spread.
  - Encourages dispersal of seed.
- Should only be used as a follow-up after another method, such as chemical
  - Wait a minimum of 2 weeks after chemical treatment and mow existing stems.

Prescribed Fire
only in combination with chemical treatment

- Fire only kill stems & seed; allows regrowth from rhizomes as well as releasing nutrients back into the soil.
- Extremely high heat burns may kill roots; habitat often too wet.

Method
- Chemically treat in year 1
- Burn at start of year 2
- Chemically treat regeneration year 2, 3. 4….

Drowning

Phragmites likes water, but too much can be used against it.

- Cutting/Burning stems and flooding with a minimum of *6 inches* of water *for 1 year* will drown the stems. Cannot transport oxygen to the roots.
- Moist soil management is NOT an option for control. The exposed drawdown moist soil encourages seed germination from adjacent areas.
- Incomplete drowning will encourage re-growth under prime habitat/growth conditions.