

TACKLING Bamboo

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

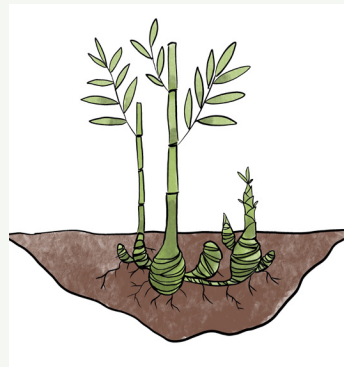
Bamboos are a large group of fast-growing evergreen grasses that are often grown as ornamental plants and commercial crops for fabric, biofuel, paper pulp, and construction materials. Unfortunately, bamboo has escaped cultivation worldwide and is commonly found in landscaped areas, forests, and streams in Metro Vancouver. Most local bamboo species originated from China and Japan.

IMPACTS

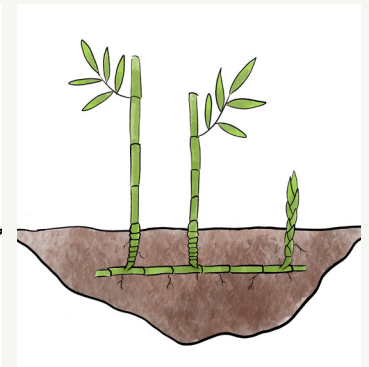
Bamboos can escape from gardens and invade neighbouring properties. They can grow through cracks in building foundations and damage roads. In natural areas, they compete with native plants and cause seedling death due to root competition. Along streams, falling bamboo leaves can decrease water quality and impact drainage. Once established, bamboo plants are challenging to control.

IDENTIFICATION

- **Growth Form:** Bamboo is categorized into two groups depending on the growth habit of the underground stems (rhizomes)
 - **Clumping bamboo** grows as dense, distinct clumps that don't spread far
 - **Running bamboo** grows horizontally, forming new underground stems that extend long distances ; this group has a higher risk of being invasive



Cross section of clumping bamboo, with minimal outward spread and slow growth
CREDIT: I. GASIOR



Cross section of running bamboo, with multiple stems arising from horizontal rhizomes
CREDIT: I. GASIOR



Mature, woody bamboo stems with segments
CREDIT: ISCMV



Leaves
CREDIT: ISCMV

- **Stems:** Segmented, straight, woody, mostly hollow stems that grow from rhizomes
- **Leaves:** Narrow and pointed at the tip, 5-15 centimetres long, arranged in a fan-like pattern on branches
- **Flowers & Seeds:** Bamboos rarely reproduce by flowers and seeds and these plant parts are not likely to be observed

CONTROL METHODS

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade, grow or propagate bamboo. If bamboo is already present in a garden, it is critical to prevent the plant from invading adjacent yards, parks and natural areas. Effective invasive plant management typically includes a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling bamboo on private property or where permission has been granted by the landowner or manager. Other methods, such as creating a barrier to contain the bamboo and prevent further spread, may be used by professionals.

CONTROL METHOD	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	Digging	Small stands of clumping or running bamboo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a shovel or pickaxe to remove as much of the plant as possible, including the underground stems and roots
Mechanical	Excavation	Large stands of clumping or running bamboo where heavy equipment is accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove as much of the plant as possible, including the underground stems and roots• This method causes soil disturbance
Manual/ mechanical	Repeated cutting or mowing	Any site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cut and remove mature stems, then cut or mow new stems that appear every month, increasing to every 2 weeks during July and August• This method gradually exhausts the plants' energy reserves

To achieve success, all underground stems and roots must be removed and disposed of appropriately. Control of established bamboo is labour intensive, requiring many years of repeated treatments.

How Can You Help?

- Do not purchase, trade, or grow bamboo.
- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out growgreenguide.ca for suggestions.
- Remove any plant parts or seeds from clothing, pets, tools, vehicles, etc.
- Do not place invasive plants in your backyard composter as the temperature will not become hot enough to destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- Download the '[Report Invasives BC](#)' app to identify and report invasive species.

For the complete set of best management practices for bamboo, and other key invasive species, visit MetroVancouver.org and search 'Invasive Species'.



At this site, running bamboo has escaped from a residential property and is spreading down the fence line

CREDIT: ISCMV