

TACKLING

Reed Canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

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

Reed canarygrass is a fast-growing grass that can thrive in a variety of conditions. It is common throughout wetlands in Metro Vancouver. Management of reed canarygrass is challenging because control methods can damage sensitive ecosystems.

IMPACTS

This grass forms such thick, dense patches in wetlands, ditches, and wet meadows preventing native plants from surviving. Reed canarygrass provides little food for native wildlife. It changes the water level and flow of wetlands, limiting the movement of salmon and other aquatic species. It also causes flooding and reduces opportunities for recreational activities such as swimming, fishing and boating.

IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Perennial grass; pieces of stem and roots can produce new plants; the above-ground portions of the plant die back in winter and lay flat on the ground
- **Stem:** Hollow, round, 1 centimetre in diameter and up to 2 metres high
- **Leaves:** Flat, up to 0.5 metres long, narrowing to a sharp point; has one of the widest leaves of all grasses (up to 20 millimetres wide); pale-green during the growing season, turning to straw-colour in the winter
- **Flowers:** Located at the ends of the stems and look different through the year – closed at first and spreading open with maturity



Stems and leaves in summer



Leaves in winter



Flowers

CREDITS: LESLIE J MEHRHOFF, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, BUGWOOD.ORG

- **Seeds:** Small, flat, shiny black-brown
- **Roots:** Large, pink and appear scaly

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not purchase, trade, or grow reed canarygrass plants or seeds for erosion control, landscaping, or in agricultural settings. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent wetlands and other sensitive ecosystems. Effective invasive plant management typically involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling reed canarygrass on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. **Work at wetland sites may require permits from provincial or federal authorities and consultation with a qualified environmental professional.**

CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Cultural	Plant a variety of native grasses, shrubs and trees, creating shade that will discourage growth of reed canarygrass	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires at least a five-year commitment Not suitable for sites that flood Can be used with other control methods
Manual	Dig out the entire plant, including the roots	Individual plants, sites less than 10 square metres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causes minimal harm to surrounding plants Easiest when the soil is wet Any roots left in the soil may re-sprout
	Cover plants with cardboard, mulch or landscape fabric	Sensitive sites or dense sites with few other plants or other obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover should stay in place at least one year Cut or mow first to help with cover placement Challenging to install around other plants

Restore the area with native plants. Monitor and remove any reed canarygrass regrowth. It is most important to remove regrowth during the first two years after planting native species, as it helps the native plants to establish and grow large enough to compete with the reed canarygrass.

How Can You Help?

- 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 reed canarygrass, and other key invasive species, visit MetroVancouver.org and search 'Invasive Species'.



Reed canarygrass at Colony Farm Regional Park in Coquitlam/Port Coquitlam

CREDIT: ISCMV