

Semi-
Aquatic
Invasive
Plant

Phragmites

Phragmites australis subsp. *australis*



What is it and Why is it a Problem?

Invasive *Phragmites*, or European Common Reed, is a fast-spreading, perennial, invasive aquatic grass found in wetlands, shorelands, and roadside ditches. It prefers to live in areas of standing water, but its roots can grow far distances, allowing it to establish in dry areas too. This aggressive plant disturbs native biodiversity by outcompeting our native plants for water and nutrients, and by releasing toxins through its roots to kill surrounding native vegetation. It produces dense monocultures that draw down the water level due to rapid transpiration levels and renders areas unsuitable for the reptiles, amphibians, birds and other animals that depend on beach, wetland and shoreland habitats for their life processes. This plant can grow as tall as 5 m which can block drivers' site lines along roadways and ruin aesthetic lakefront views. It can also grow to be so dense that it blocks waterfront access, impeding recreational activities like boating, swimming and fishing.



What Does it Look Like?

- Grows in extremely dense stands at 200 stems/sq. m
- Grows up to 5 m tall
- Rough, rigid and tan-beige stems
- Bluish-green leaves
- Large, dense seedheads

Note that there are native species of *Phragmites* in The Land Between as well. To differentiate between the native and invasive look-alikes, it is important to know that native *Phragmites*:

- grows in less dense stands which allow other plants to grow in between;
- grows up to 2 m tall;
- has smooth, flexible, reddish-brown stems;
- has more yellowish-green leaves; and,
- has smaller, less dense seedheads.



**The Land
Between**

Cottage Country's
Conservation Organization



**The Blue
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How Can it be Managed?

Prevention

- Report sightings of any invasive species online through [EDDMapS Ontario](#), a web-based mapping system which also has an app, or through the [Invasive Species in Ontario](#) project on [iNaturalist.org](#).
- Stay on the trail and keep pets on a leash to avoid unintentionally spreading the root fragments and seeds.
- Do not buy, plant or sell invasive Phragmites by learning how to identify it.
- Inspect and clean mud, seeds and plant fragments from clothing, pets, ATV's and tools after leaving an infested area. Additionally, inspect your boat, trailer and fishing gear before leaving a fishing spot and before heading to a new fishing spot to remove any mud and plant fragments. Refer to the [OMNRF's Boater's Action Plan](#) for more information on cleaning your boat and gear.

Removal

Avoid mowing! This can actually encourage growth and increase stand density. The right technique to properly remove invasive Phragmites will be dependent on the size, location and density of the stand, as well as the type of resources for removal you have at your disposal. For small, young patches, consider spading. This technique is outlined in the [Invasive Phragmites Removal Protocol](#). The protocol and other *Phragmites* related resources can be found on The Land Between website [here](#). Ensure you follow [OMNRF's rules](#) regarding removing invasive aquatic plants.

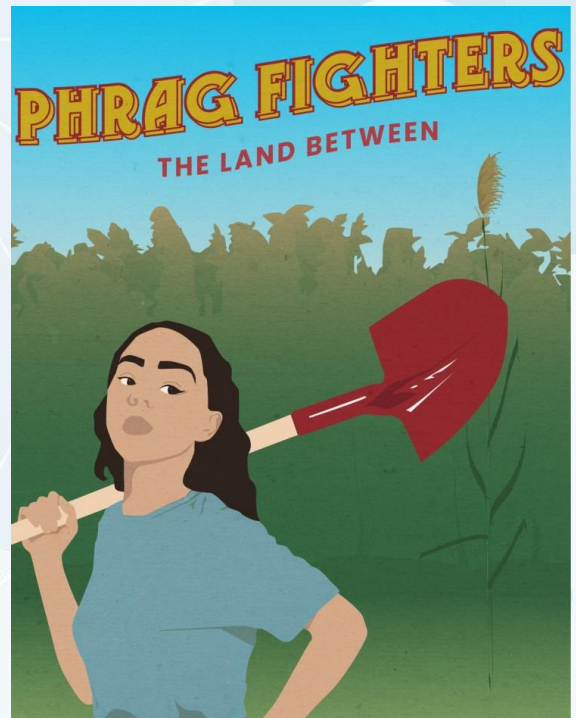
Disposal

Phragmites can be brought to a designated disposal facility in your municipality in a plastic bag. If your municipality does not have a disposal facility, you can collect the seed heads in a black plastic bag to rot - they can be disposed of regularly after this. For the stems, collect them in a brown paper bag to dry. Once dried, and if your municipality permits it, you can burn the bags in burn barrels. If you cannot do either of these things, seal plant material in a black plastic bag until it rots, then dispose of in garbage.



Want to Get Involved?

Do you want to become a Phrag Fighter with The Land Between? As a Phrag Fighter you can survey for and/or remove stands of invasive Phragmites. Surveying for invasive Phragmites takes place in the spring and Phragmites removal requires cutting an assigned stand two to three times throughout the season beginning in mid-June. Training is provided for either option. Visit [The Land Between website](#) for more information!



References

[Great Lakes Nonindigenous Species Information System](#), produced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Invasive Aquatic Plant Species: A Quick Reference Guide](#), produced by Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

[Invasive Phragmites - Best Management Practices](#), produced by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

[Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program](#), developed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).