PHRAGMITES/COMMON REED
[*Phragmites australis* (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud.]
PHAU7

Fig. 1 UGA 5241085

Fig. 2 UGA 0016216

Problem: Based on genetic analysis, there are believed to be three separate lineages of *Phragmites australis* in North America.[5] The non-native invasive lineage was likely introduced from Europe.[5] Phragmites or common reed invades sites quickly outcompeteing native plants,[2,3] changing wetland hydrology, decreasing habitat for native wildlife species, and creating fire hazards.[2] The invasive lineage is very difficult to tell apart from the native form and expert consultation is advised if the invasive form is suspected.[3,5]
Habit: Stout, perennial grass,[2,6,7] to 6 m (~20 ft);[2] both forms occur in dense monocultures (Fig. 1), however, density varies in the native form and it usually co-occurs with other species;[5] turn brown in winter (Fig. 2).[3]

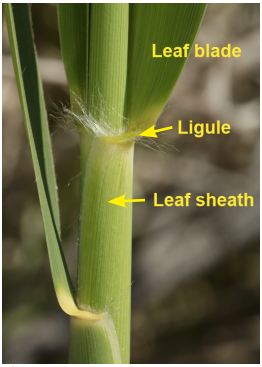

Fig. 3 © 2009 Steve Matson

Reproduction: Seed and vegetatively by rhizomes;[1,2,3,7] seeds wind and water-dispersed.[3,5]
Leaves/Blades: 25 to 50 cm long (10 to 20 in);[3] blue-green and darker than the native form, which is usually lighter and more yellow-green in color;[5] long white hairs are present at the ligule (juncture of the leaf blade and leaf sheath) (Fig. 3); small differences in ligule length between the two forms.[5]

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PHRAGMITES/COMMON REED

Phragmites australis (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud.

Fig. 4 UGA 5241088

Stems/Culms: Leaf sheaths (lower part of leaf) (Fig. 3) adhere tightly to the culm (stem) and persist on the culm as long as it is standing;[5] sheaths on the native form fall off easily exposing the stem and may be absent during flowering; because of this exposure, culms in the native form tend to turn maroon to brownish in color;[5] fungal spots can occur on the culms of the native form; the invasive form is not affected by this fungus.[5]

Flowers: Summer;[2] fanned loose plume,[4] light brown to purple inflorescence (Fig. 3) persists through winter,[3] 20-40 cm long (~7½ to 15 in);[3] native inflorescence more sparse and may not persist through the winter;[3,5] small differences in the glume length (bracts at base of spikelet/primary inflorescence)[5] between the two forms.[5]

Fruits/Seeds: Light brown, small, ~8 mm (~¼ in) long.[3]

Habitat: Variety of habitats, although it prefers wet areas like wetlands, marshes, drainage ditches, lakes, ponds and floodplains;[1,2,3,7] tolerates brackish water.[1,2,3]

Similar Species: Giant reed (*Arundo donax* L.)[6] is a non-native reed that grows taller, has thicker bamboo or corn stalk-like culms, and longer, droopy leaves (Fig. 5).[2] Leaf bases also clasp the culm and are hairless, unlike phragmites (Fig. 6).[2,4] Giant reed flower plumes are erect and can reach up to 1 m long (~36 in) (Fig. 7).[2,4,7]

Fig. 5 UGA 1237029

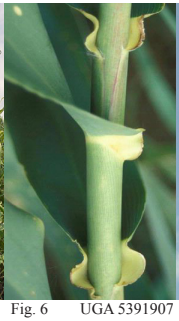
Fig. 6 UGA 5391907

Fig. 7 UGA 2132033

Phragmites australis (phragmites/common reed)

Text Citations:

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Photograph Information:

Figures 1 and 4 (photographer: Richard Old, XID Services, Inc.).

Figures 2 (photographer: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service).

Figure 5 (photographer: Chuck Bargeron, Univiversity of Georgia).

Figure 6 (photographer: John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy).

Figure 7 (photographer: David J. Moorhead, University of Georgia).

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