

# Phragmites australis

Invasive to Maine

European Common Reed,  
Phragmites, Giant Reed

Freshwater and Coastal  
Fields, Water's Edge, and Developed Areas

## Leaves



Ruth Maclean, King Middle School



Look for tall, narrow, pale-green leaves that are sword-shaped. Leaves are 2 to 5 cm wide and up to 0.5 m long and have smooth edges. The leaves are much shorter than the stem and arranged alternately.

## Plant



Ruth Maclean, King Middle School



Look for a grass growing up to 6 m tall with large flowering clusters. It remains standing in the winter after it has died.

## Stem



Ann Murray, University of Florida

PERMITTED USE

Look for stems that are up to 6 m tall, stiff, and hollow. Some grow straight up while others reach out along the ground.

## SEDGE, RUSH, OR GRASS

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF PLANTS WITH GRASS-LIKE LEAVES.  
TO TELL THEM APART LOOK AT SHAPE OF THE STEMS.

### SEDGE



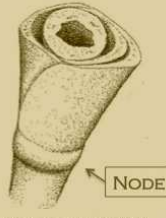
TRIANGULAR STEM

### RUSH



ROUND STEM

### GRASS



HOLLOW STEM  
WITH NODES

HINT: SEDGES HAVE EDGES, RUSHES ARE ROUND,  
GRASSES ARE HOLLOW, WHICH HAVE YOU FOUND?

## Seasonal Change



VS user 031, Falmouth Middle School



Summer flowers will be attached to the stem in large, purple, feathery bunches that fade to gold in the fall. Each flower in the cluster will be 2 to 5 cm.

## Similar Species

Several other large grasses grow in Maine wetlands, but none get as large or robust as phragmites. Also, the common reed leaves will be thicker and the clusters of flowers will be more feathery than other similar grasses, particularly those in the scirpus family.

## Did You Know?

In the Philippines, European common reed is known by the local name "tambo". When the reed flowers in December they are collected and bundled into brooms called "walis". The common name for this homemade broom is "walis tambo". That is "reed broom" to us.