

Reed Canary Grass

Phalaris arundinacea

Common Name: Reed Canary Grass

Scientific Name: *Phalaris arundinacea*

Family: Poaceae

Description

Reed canary grass is a robust, sod-forming perennial grass that grows from 50-150 cm tall or more. It is usually associated with moist soils where it forms dense monotypic, persistent stands. This is a highly variable species that has two genotypes, a non-invasive genotype found around hot springs in southeast Yukon and an aggressive invasive genotype which was derived from European stock. It has been used in highway seeding projects and for agriculture in the territory. It is considered noxious in Washington State and is listed as an invasive species in BC and Alaska.

Range in Yukon

Presently the largest known populations are along the Alaska highway from Dän Zhür Chu (Donjek) River to the White River. It is also common on the Haines highway.

Similar Species

Canary grass (*Phalaris canariensis*) is an annual species that has reported from the Pelly River area, but it is not expected to be persistent. Bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*) is a native perennial grass of wet soils, but is not as coarse and has large soft plumes of flowers.

Ecological Impact

The dense, monotypic and persistent stands may exclude and displace other plants, particularly in wetlands. It may also slow stream flow, eliminating the scouring action needed to maintain the gravel river bottoms essential for salmon production. It may cause hay fever when in flower.

Control

Once established, reed canary grass is extremely difficult to eradicate. Perennial plants require depletion of nutrient reserves in the root system, prevention of seed production and prevention of dispersal.



Photo: Bruce Bennett