Common Control Options and Best Practices

There is no native control against phragmites, but with a strong plan, it can be reduced and removed.

All areas differ, so plans must be area specific. Consult before you control.

- NEVER (trans)plant phragmites
- Assess your property regularly
- Early detection and rapid response is critical to prevent Phragmites growth
- Remove isolated plants first before addressing larger stands
- Controlling aquatic populations is best using selective cutting
- Fewer than 1000 plants can be managed manually
- Large monocultured stands are most effectively controlled with combined cutting (remove stalks) and herbicide (kill the root system) for 3 straight years
- Raspberry cane cutters are the preferred manual cutting tool
- Cutting controls density, but killing the root system is crucial to curtail re-establishment

Reporting Phragmites

If you have phragmites on or around your property and would like to report it, please reach out to any of the following:

- Report stands in EDDmapS at https://www.eddmaps.org/
- Call the OFAH's Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711
- Get in touch with the Invasive Phragmites Control Centre through www.phragcontrol.com

Learn More

Visit https://foca.on.ca/phragmites

The information expressed in this document reflects the most updated research and advice of leading professionals in Ontario as of 2021.

GREEN SHOVELS COLLABORATIVE

FOCA

Invasive Phragmites

Photo courtesy of the Invasive Species Centre

This invasive species is of special concern at your lake.

What is Phragmites and Why is it a Threat?

Phragmites is a type of reed listed as a restricted species and is regulated under Ontario's Invasive Species Act

- An aggressive, invasive species that grows rapidly
- Outcompetes native vegetation for nutrients and space
- Quickly becomes a monoculture, choking out all other species
- Current research promotes the use of herbicides to kill the root system through which phragmites populates. However, applying herbicides in Ontario waters is very complex
- Stand spread can increase several meters per year, and stalks can grow vertically 4cm daily in the summer
- Plants reproduce and spread through their root systems and seeds that disperse through the wind, on cars, boats, and recreational vehicles

Invasive Phragmites

- Stems are green/yellow (brown as stalks dry in the Fall)
- Stalks are rigid and grow in thick patches, difficult to walk through
- Seed heads/flowers are large

Native
Stem glossy and feels smooth to the touch; typically chestnut-red in the lower part of the plant.

Non-native
Stem feels rough due to ridges in the stem; typically green, but may be red on the lower stem.

Photo courtesy of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center: https://www.maisrc.umn.edu/identifying-phragmites

Native (common reed)

- Stems distinct purple/red colour
- Leaves are long, thin, and sparse
- Does not grow as densely (able to walk through them easily), they co-exist with other plants

Identification

Native phragmites can be difficult to distinguish from the invasive species but is safe and should not be removed. Please properly identify stands before reporting or managing invasive stands.

Why and How it is Threatening Your Lake

As a fast growing and densely populating species, invasive Phragmites can impact lake health and recreational activities as it quickly displaces native plants, and the wildlife dependent upon them.

Phragmites is a water-loving reed, so if it establishes in or around your lake, control and removal efforts can be limited and challenging. Spading (digging out the plant + root system) is the most effective control option.

Growth

April-May → Germination, <1m+ tall
June-July → Primary growth green, >1m
Aug-Sept → Seed heads - green/brown
Sept-Oct → Seed heads turn brown and fluffy, roots are reproducing new plants