

Weed of the Month for August 2016

Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*)

Origin: Europe

Interesting Fact: There was at one point a native common reed species, but scientists are concerned that the invasive reed has hybridized with and outcompeted the native species near (if not completely) to extinction.

Description: Common Reed is a perennial grass that can grow up to 20 ft. tall and has a distinctive fluffy, large seed head.

Defining characteristics:

- Long, alternate leaves
- Large, fluffy seed head
- Very tall (up to 20 ft.)
- Forms dense stands



(Left image) Seed head of Common Reed

(Center image) Small Common Reed individual

(Right image) Close-up of where leaf attaches to stem

Habitat: Found in wet places, e.g. ditches and ponds. Can tolerate brackish conditions.

A roadside infestation of Common Reed in Vincennes.



Ecological threat: Common Reed can form very dense, tall stands, which inhibit native species establishment. In addition, when Common Reed forms these dense stands, wetlands can be converted into land because of the drastic increase in plant biomass.

Control Methods:

- **Manual:** Cutting or mowing annually at the end of July can be an effective control method. Burning can be an effective method to reduce the biomass of an area.
- **Chemical:** Using glyphosate approved for aquatic areas at a foliar spray concentration, applying after the seed head appears.

References

Dickinson, Richard and France Royer. *Weeds of North America*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014. Print.

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