



Invasive Species of the Month for January 2020

Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

Origin: North American and Eurasian strains

Introduction: First cultivated in US in the mid 1830s as an ornamental grass

Interesting Fact: Reed Canary Grass has a native strain to North America, but a Eurasian population has been cultivated in North America for close to 200 years and now is more common than the native strain. The invasive Eurasian population is characterized by its ability to dominate areas.

Botanical Terminology:

Culm – the central stem of grasses

Ligule – membrane where leaf attaches to culm

Panicle – a type of inflorescence with multiple flowers per branch

Description: Reed Canary Grass is a perennial grass that can grow to 6 ft. tall. It has a noticeable, transparent ligule, bluish-green leaves, and compact seedheads that spread out at maturity.

Defining characteristics:

- Blue-green foliage (may be variegated)
- Dense growth via rhizomes
- Conspicuous, transparent ligule where the leaf meets the culm
- Compact seedheads that spread out at maturity



Left Images: Reed Canary Grass' dense foliage

Center Image: The thin, conspicuous ligule of Reed Canary Grass

Right Images: The compact panicle of Reed Canary Grass



Habitat: Marshes, swamps, floodplain areas, ditches, riparian areas, right-of-ways, and other disturbed areas



Above Image: Reed Canary Grass along a ditch in Daviess County.

Ecological threat: Reed Canary Grass can form dense patches, inhibiting other native wetland plant species. Reed Canary Grass can spread both by seeds, which can persist in the seedbank for over 20 years, and rhizomes. Reed Canary Grass can also influence the hydrology of wetlands and riparian areas and may degrade wildlife habitat.

Control Methods:

- Manual: Mowing or cutting patches of Reed Canary Grass can reduce biomass but cannot control it long term.
- Chemical: Probably the most effective method on large, dense patches in conjunction with manual methods. Foliar applications of herbicides with an aquatic glyphosate* solution are effective when applied in early spring or late fall.

*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

References

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Knox County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area

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