

# Phragmites australis

European Common Reed,  
Phragmites, Giant Reed

Invasive to Maine

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

## Leaves



Ruth Maclean, King Middle School, ME



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, ME



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



Ann Murray, University of Florida

PERMITTED USE

In July and August look for flowers that attach to the end of the stem in large purple feathery bunches that fade to gold in the fall.

[www.vitalsignsme.org](http://www.vitalsignsme.org)

## Similar Species

One way to tell European Common Reed from similar species is its size. No other grass in Maine grows as tall as this species. Even when young the leaves are likely to be thicker than other grasses.

## Fun Fact

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.