

CARP Factsheet

INVASIVE ALIEN PLANT: The Towering Grass

COMMON NAME: Common Reed

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phragmites australis*

PLANT TYPE: Perennial Grass

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Form – very tall, usually in dense, single species stands (monocultures)

Height – can exceed 5m!

Leaves – simple, long, narrow, smooth, wide (up to 4cm)

Flowers – in plume like spikes (up to 30cm long), purple (changing to grey in late summer), individual flowers have long silky hairs

Fruit – flower heads look fluffy as seeds within mature

Blooms in – late July and August

Other Features – extensive, creeping roots

NOTE: There is also a native Common Reed, and they may be difficult to distinguish

ORIGIN: Europe (but there is a native variety too)

INTRODUCED (late 1700s or early 1800s) FOR: accidental – possibly seed in animal feed

HABITAT: wetland fringes, including salt marshes

MEANS OF SPREAD: spreading rhizomes (vegetative), and sometimes wind-dispersed seed

PROBLEMS:

- may outcompete native wetland species
- dense monocultures prevent anything from growing underneath it
- eradication is very difficult

IF YOU HAVE THIS PLANT ON YOUR PROPERTY:

- fortunately, this plant is restricted to a few areas in the valley
- if you do have it, remove it promptly, and do not compost (dry and burn, or regular garbage)
- hand pull or dig individual plants; be prepared to follow up on new plants produced by any roots left behind (extensive roots make this plant hard to control)



Photos: **Flower** – James R. Allison, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, www.forestryimages.com,
Infestation – Marika Godwin, Clean Annapolis River Project (CARP)