COMMON REED

Phragmites australis ssp. australis
Origin: Europe & Middle East

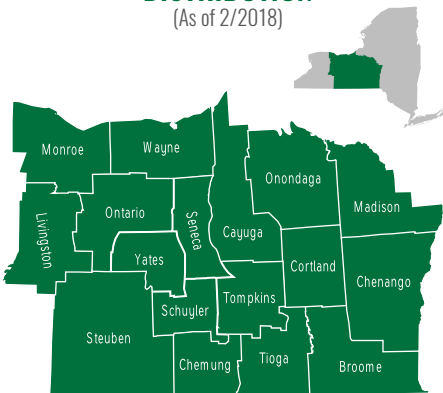Common reed is a tall, herbaceous, perennial plant that grows 1-6 m tall from rhizomes or stolons (horizontal stems). The stems are hollow and ribbed. Leaves are linear, flat, drooping, smooth, and blue-green in color. The flowers grow in an oblong panicle inflorescence and progress from purple to straw-colored when mature. The non-native subspecies can be distinguished from the native using leaf color (blue-green vs yellow-green), persistent leaf sheaths, and rougher texture on the stem. Common reed mostly reproduces clonally through rhizomes but will also grow from viable seeds.

HABITAT
Common reed grows on shorelines, wetlands, ditches, and disturbed sites. It can tolerate saline habitats and a wide range of environmental conditions.

THREAT
Common reed forms dense monocultures, displaces native species, and degrades wetland habitat. It also alters habitat structure and hydrology. The leaves and stems are of poor nutritional value to wildlife. Dense stands impede shoreline access and can block important signage, as well as pose a fire hazard during its dormant season.

MANAGEMENT
Prescribed burning following herbicide treatment can help manage common reed populations. Mechanical control can slow the spread but will not eradicate established stands. Soil disruption should be kept to a minimum since it encourages re-sprouting. Cut material should be raked, bagged, and disposed of to prevent seed dispersal. Large stands are best managed using herbicides.

INVASIVE RANKING, NYS
Very High

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY
Chemical
Physical
Prevention

DISTRIBUTION
(As of 2/2018)

Monroe
Wayne
Onondaga
Madison
Livingston
Ontario
Seneca
Cayuga
Yates
Cortland
Chenango
Schuyler
Tompkins
Steuben
Chemung
Tioga
Broome

www.fingerlakesinvasives.org

REFERENCE - Sturtevant, R., A. Fusaro, W. Conard, and S. Iott, 2017, Phragmites australis australis (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud.: U.S. Geological Survey, Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database, Gainesville, FL
NOAA Great Lakes Aquatic Nonindigenous Species Information System, Ann Arbor, MI, https://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/greatlakes/FactSheet.aspx?SpeciesID=2937, Revision Date: 6/3/2016, Access Date: 9/15/2017

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