



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
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REED CANARYGRASS

Phalaris arundinacea

THREAT: Native to Europe, reed canarygrass is a Class C Noxious Weed in Whatcom County. It is widespread and found on every major landmass except Antarctica and Greenland. It threatens wetland ecosystems, livestock, salmon, native plants and aggravates allergies in humans. Reed canarygrass spreads easily by creeping rhizomes, vegetative fragments and seeds. It is frost tolerant and starts growth very early in the season, allowing it to outcompete desirable species. It grows in roadside ditches, rights-of-way, river dikes and levees, wetlands, meadows, riparian areas and other wet sites. Once Reed canarygrass invades, diversity declines drastically. Reed canarygrass does not provide shade and contributes to a rise in water temperature, which decreases habitat for salmon as well as other wildlife. This grass impedes water flow, increases siltation, and can lead to soil erosion. Although planted as a soil stabilizer and forage, it had been found to cause indigestion and illness in livestock. Reed canarygrass produces copious amounts of pollen.



DESCRIPTION: Reed Canarygrass, a member of the grass family, typically thrives in areas that are saturated or nearly saturated for most of the growing season. It grows 3-6 feet tall, with sturdy hollow stems up to ½ inch diameter. Leaves are flat and hairless, coming off the stem at 45° angles. Inconspicuous flower clusters are borne on stems high above the leaves. Creeping rhizomes spread the plant and form a dense layer just below the soil surface.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Hand pulling is only practical for small or patchy distribution. Reed canarygrass does not tolerate shade, so establishing desirable trees and shrubs may be a long-term goal. Covering with a fabric or plastic barrier will control, but not eliminate populations. Mowing, pulling, burning and chemical control may also be effective, especially used where native plants can re-establish. For site-specific chemical control recommendations, contact the Weed Control Board.

