

## Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)



Figure 1



Figure 2

### Identification

Reed canary grass is one of the worst invasives in Wisconsin. It is a large, coarse grass that reaches 2 to 9 feet in height. It has an erect, hairless stem with gradually tapering leaf blades 3 1/2 to 10 inches long and 1/4 to 3/4 inch in width. Blades are flat and have a rough texture on both surfaces. Single flowers occur in dense clusters in May to mid-June. They are green to purple at first and change to beige over time. This grass is one of the first to sprout in spring, and forms a thick rhizome system that dominates the subsurface soil. The shiny seeds may be green, brown or purplish in color.

### Control Methods

- Hand-pulling or digging may work on small stands in the early stages of invasion. Small, discrete patches may also be covered by black plastic for at least one growing season. This method is not always effective and must be monitored because rhizomes can spread beyond the edge of the plastic.
- Larger stands can be mowed twice yearly (early to mid-June and again in early October) to remove seed heads before they mature.
- Frequent and continued cultivation that disrupts the roots weakens the plants and depletes the seed bank is important since one or two cultivations would simply cut the roots up and increase the number of individual plants.

### Additional Information/Resources

- Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium [Reed Canary Grass](#)
- Invasive Species of Wisconsin, UW-Green Bay Herbarium [Reed Canary Grass](#)
- Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Hotline [608-224-3721](tel:608-224-3721) (M-F, 9 am-12 noon, April 15 – October 31) or [horticulture@countyofdane.com](mailto:horticulture@countyofdane.com)