

Phalaris arundinacea

COMMON NAMES

reed canary grass

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Tall grass, up to 2 m tall with leaf-blades up to 40 cm long and 2 cm wide arranged on often upright stems, producing a large flowerhead up to 30 cm long and 4 cm across, either an open branched head or closed to a spike.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Purple

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Robust perennials, 60–200 cm, with long-creeping rhizomes. **Leaf-sheath** chartaceous, glabrous, striate, light brown. **Ligule** 2.5–7.5–(10) mm, entire, but soon lacerate. **Leaf-blade** 20–40 cm × 8–20 mm, ribs numerous, fine, adaxially smooth but scabrid near tip, abaxially with strong midrib near base, ribs densely, minutely scabrid; margins minutely scabrid, long-narrowed to scabrid, acute tip. **Culm** 50–180 cm. **Panicle** 9–30 × 1.5–4 cm, lanceolate or oblong, lobed below; rachis smooth below, scabrid above, branches scabrid, spreading at anthesis. **Spikelets** 4–5.5 mm, pale green or purplish. **Glumes** ± equal, 3-nerved, lanceolate, keeled but not winged, acute to acuminate, minutely scabrid, rarely lower glume with minute hairs near margin. **Ø florets**: lemmas equal, 1.3–1.6 mm, narrow, short-hairy. **≡ florets** 3–4 mm, broadly keeled, lanceolate, acute, firm and shining below, short-hairy above; palea much narrower than lemma; anthers (2)–2.5–3.2 mm; caryopsis c. 2 × 1 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Much more robust than other wetland grasses with the exception of the rare pest plants Manchurian wild rice and phragmites.

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered throughout New Zealand.

HABITAT

Swamps. Including under shade of willows and open kahikatea forest, wet grassland, margins of water bodies, wet waste areas and roadsides.

GENUS

Phalaris

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Phalaris arundinacea L.



Old inflorescence. Foxton Loop. Feb 2011. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Ligules. Foxton Loop. Feb 2011. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–January

FRUITING

Autumn

YEAR NATURALISED

1874

ORIGIN

Europe, Asia, North America and South Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Pasture plant, also ornamental plant.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Seed dispersed by water, animals or contaminated machinery.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

PHAARU

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Manaaki Whenua Press, Christchurch, NZ. 650 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Edgar and Connor (2000).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/phalaris-arundinacea/>

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