

# Be On the Look-Out (BOLO)

## Invasive Weed

### Phragmites australis (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud.

**Family:** Poaceae (Gramineae), Grass Family

**Common Name:** Common reed, phragmites

**Basis as an Invasive Weed:** The robust erect grass invades wetlands and can form extensive mono-stands crowding out other species. It can grow in standing water. It tolerates brackish water.

**Plant Parts Often Intercepted:** Spikelets ('seeds'). It is one of the most common contaminants found in foreign maritime cargo entering Hawaii. The propagules have been originating from Pacific islands (Guam, Philippines, Indonesia), Asia and Europe.

**Other information:** The plant is used for thatching, material for baskets and mats, and as a food source. The plant is established in every state except Alaska. Its establishment status in Hawaii is unclear. There are native-strain populations of Phragmites australis as well as introduced exotic-strain populations. The introduced strains appear to be the problem plants, especially along the Atlantic Coast of the United States. The plant is widely distributed and has naturalized in many places in the world. It is not listed on the Federal Noxious Weed List (FNW).

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Phragmites australis is a perennial grass 2.5 to 4.5 meters tall (8.2 to 14.8 feet) and may get to 6 meters (19.7 ft). It spreads mostly by its stout creeping rhizomes and stolons. The inflorescence is a dense purple to brown to tan-white fluffy panicle. The lanceolate spikelet is about 10 to 18 mm long, and the lemma apex is acuminate. The tufts of silky fine hairs on the spikelets assist in wind-dispersal.

