

Phalaris arundinacea

COMMON NAME

reed canary grass

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Phalaris arundinacea L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

PHAARU

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF 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.

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.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

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** lemma 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.

FLOWERING

October–January

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Purple



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



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

FRUITING

Autumn

LIFE CYCLE

Seed dispersed by water, animals or contaminated machinery.

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.

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

MORE INFORMATION

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