

WHAT IS PHRAGMITES ?

Phragmites australis is a perennial grass that grows in dense stands up to 12 feet in height. Also known as Common Reed, this plant can be found worldwide. It is an aggressive invader of wetland areas particularly where the soil has been disturbed or exposed. Dense stands of phragmites crowd out native wetland plants and provide little or no value to wildlife.

WHY IS PHRAGMITES A THREAT?

Thick stands of phragmites also pose a significant wildfire threat to surrounding communities. Because the stands contain a lot of standing dead material, they will carry fire readily even in summer when the current year's growth is still green. Fire danger is increased in the fall after the current growth is killed by frost and remains high until spring greenup.



For more information, please contact the Virginia Department of Forestry or your local fire department.

Thank you to Poquoson Fire Department for your interest in educating the public.



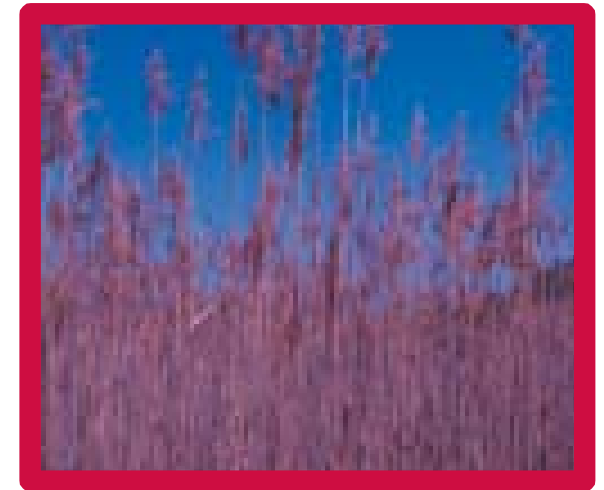
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PHRAGMITES AND FIRE



**REDUCE
THE RISK
TO YOUR HOME !**

Virginia Department of Forestry

RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEM AND REDUCE THE RISK

Phragmites is easily recognized by its large plumed flower head that persists throughout the winter. If stands of this plant are growing nearby, your home may be at an increased risk of damage by wildfire. However, there are steps you can take to reduce the risk.

THE YARD

- ❑ Maintain a defensible space of at least 30 feet around your home. This will serve as a firebreak in the event of a wildfire and it will also give firefighters room to work. Control any vegetation, particularly phragmites, growing in this area. Also remove any dead vegetation, such as leaves and pine needles, that can carry fire.
- ❑ Landscape with fire resistant plants (for example, plants with high water retention ability and no highly flammable aromatic oils).
- ❑ Don't burn trash or brush. Take it to the local landfill instead.

ACCESS

- ❑ Keep your lane or driveway open. Remove vegetation that can burn and trap you in or prevent access to your home by emergency vehicles.
- ❑ Be sure your house number is clearly visible from the road.

THE HOUSE

- ❑ Keep your roof, gutters and deck clear of dead leaves and pine needles.
- ❑ Don't stack firewood against your house or under your deck. Also, don't store gas cans or lawnmowers under your deck.
- ❑ Keep your chimney clean - have it checked at least twice a year.

For more information on reducing the risk of wildfire to your home, contact the Virginia Department of Forestry or your local Fire Department.

