

CONTROLLING PHRAGMITES

Please Note that implementing the control techniques listed below will result in the accumulation of loose plant material. *It is important to collect, transport and dispose of this material carefully. Seeds, rhizomes and roots must be bagged at the removal site.* It is possible to burn Phragmites, but care must be taken because this plant produces a very hot fire. Plant material burns more effectively when the cuttings are left to dry out. Plant material can be placed in kraft paper yard waste bags and taken to the compost area at the transfer station. Do not add any part of an invasive plant to a home composter. If you gather plant material in the fall, bag it and take advantage of the yard waste pick up.

For the control of Phragmites, here's what works:

1. Pulling & Digging — effective with individual new plants or with very sparse stands

Pulling the plant out of the ground by the stalk and digging the young rhizomes (horizontal runners, either on the surface or under ground) can be effective with sparse stands or a new single plant. Care needs to be taken to ensure that as much as possible of the buried rhizomes and roots are removed. If stalks, roots, and rhizomes are left on the ground they'll take root and start new plants. Follow procedures outlined above for bagging and disposal.

2. Removal of Seed Heads — to prevent broad dispersal

In late August or early September, cut the seed heads or the purplish flower heads and bag them. It is best to cut them on a day with little to no wind. This prevents the widespread dispersal of Phragmites via seeds. This technique will not kill an existing stand, nor will it prevent it from spreading via rhizomes.

3. Cutting — to weaken the root system

Cut Phragmites at the base of the stalk below the first node soon after it flowers in mid to late August or sets its seeds in September. All cut stalks must be removed from the site, and care must be taken to bag and dispose of all seeds and rhizomes. Removing the stalk prevents the energy produced in the summer and stored in the plant above ground from nourishing the rhizomes and roots. Cutting must be done several years in succession before results will be seen.