

REED CANARYGRASS

Phalaris arundinacea L.

Plant Symbol = PHAR3

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Pullman Plant Material Center, Pullman, Washington



Britton & Brown 1913
 Illustrated Flora of the Northern States and Canada
 @ PLANTS

Alternate Names

gardener's-garters (Source: [Hortus 3](#)), reed Canary grass (Source: [World Econ Pl](#)), ribbon grass (Source: [Dict Gard](#)), variegated grass (Source: [Webster's Dict](#)), alpiste roseau (Source: [Dict Rehm](#)) [French], Rohrglanzgras (Source: [Dict Rehm](#)) [German], kusa-yoshi (Source: F Japan Ohwi) [Japanese], caniçomalhado (Source: [Dict Rehm](#)) [Portuguese], hierba cinta (Source: [Dict Rehm](#)) [Spanish], pasto cinto (Source: [Dict Rehm](#)) [Spanish] (USDA, ARS 2002)

Uses

Use of reed canarygrass in the Pacific Northwest basically began at the turn of the century. Farming commonly followed logging operations and reed canarygrass was frequently used as the "breaking in"

crop (Wheeler 1950). Stumps & logging debris and clearing operations left the land unsuitable for planting crops such as small grains. Reed canarygrass was planted in these areas to allow time for the stumps and debris to degrade and be more easily removed at a later date.

Reed canarygrass popularity in the Pacific Northwest was a composite of many factors. It is an extremely productive grass. Reports of production far exceeding other grasses are common in the early literature. It is very easy to establish and it persists very well. Most plantings occurred during a period of history when farms were more self-reliant. Livestock were pastured on the farm, and hay was grown on the farm rather than purchased from hay brokers. It was a reliable, productive forage.

A second wave of interest in reed canarygrass occurred when wastewater management became an important issue. Reed canarygrass has the ability to respond exceedingly well to applied nutrients and one study showed a yield response to levels as high as 920 pounds N/acre (Schmitt et al. 1999). Zeiders (1976) reported, "reed canarygrass is the most popular species for irrigation with wastewater from municipal and industrial sources as a pollution control measure".

The most recent wave of interest in reed canarygrass is occurring in Europe. Reed canarygrass is being cultivated in northern Europe as a biofuel and about 10,000 acres are in production in Scandinavia (Kätterer et al (1998).

It is a plant with many uses. Unfortunately, reed canarygrass has proven to be too aggressive in the Pacific Northwest. It moves out of pastureland and into stream bottoms, wetlands, and canal banks. It persists in areas where it is not desirable and is the bane of wetland restoration.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative

Schoth, H.A. 1938. *Reed canarygrass*. USDA Farmers' Bulletin 1602. 11pp.

Sheaffer, C.C., D.W. Miller, & G.C. Marten 1990. *Grass dominance and moisture yield and quality in perennial grass-alfalfa mixtures*. J. Prod. Agric. 3:480-485.

Stannard, M. & W. Crowder 2001. *Biology, history, and suppression of reed canarygrass (Phalaris arundinacea)*. USDA, NRCS, Plant Materials Technical Note 43, Pullman Plant Materials Center, Pullman, Washington. 8pp.

Stout, D. Curator, USDA ARS West Region Plant Introduction Station, Pullman, Washington.

Tsvelev, N. N. 1983. *Grasses of the Soviet Union, Part 1*. Publ.; Oxonian Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi

USDA, ARS 2002. *Phalaris arundinacea*. Germplasm Resources Information Network. Beltsville, Maryland

USDA, CSREES 2000. *Pacific Northwest weed control handbook*. Cooperative Extension Services of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

Wheeler, W.A. 1950. *Forage and Pasture Crops: a handbook of information about the grasses and legumes grown for forage in the United States*. Publ.; D, Van Nostrand Co., NY

Zeiders, K.E. 1976. *A new disease of reed canarygrass caused by Helminasporium catenarium*. Plant Disease Reporter 60:556-568.

Photo Credits:

“Purdue Forage Information”

<http://www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/forages/publications/grasses/reed-canry.htm>

“The Nature Conservancy”

<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/photos/phaar04.jpg>

The use of product names in this document is for simplicity and information, and does not imply endorsement by the NRCS over other equivalent materials.

Prepared By & Species Coordinators:

Mark Stannard and Wayne Crowder, USDA, NRCS, Pullman Plant Material Center, Pullman, Washington

Edited: 11april02 jsp; 25feb03 ahv; 060802 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Read about [Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service](#).