



Giant Reed *Arundo donax* L.

Common Names: Giant reed, Spanish reed, wild cane, cana brava, carrizo

Native Origin: India and countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, including Italy, Greece, Egypt, and Algeria

Description: Giant reed, a member of the grass family (Poaceae), is one of the largest herbaceous perennial grasses, growing to over 20 feet in height. Corn-like stems may be 1/4 to 2 inches thick. Blue-green alternate leaves are elongated, 1-2 inches wide and 12 inches long. Long, dense, plumes of whorled stemmed flowers reaching to 36 inches long occur during August and September. Seeds are not viable. Tough fibrous roots penetrate deeply into the soil. Reproduction of giant reed is primarily vegetative, through rhizomes which root and sprout readily.



Habitat: It becomes established in moist places such as ditches, streams, and riverbanks, growing best in well drained soils where abundant moisture is available. It tolerates a wide variety of conditions, including high salinity, and can flourish in many soil types from heavy clays to loose sands, and from moist well-drained soils to those with a water table at or near the surface. It occurs on upland sites as scattered dense clumps along roadsides and forest margins, migrating from old home plantings by displaced rhizome fragments.

Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. Giant reed is distributed from Arkansas and Texas to California, where it is found throughout the state, and in the east, from Virginia to Kentucky and Missouri and generally southward. It is reported invasive in AZ, CA, GA, MD, NM, NV, TX, and VA.



Ecological Impacts: Giant reed forms dense thickets of distinct clumps which chokes riversides and stream channels, crowds out native plants, interferes with flood control, increases fire potential, and reduces habitat for wildlife, including the Least Bell's vireo, a federally endangered bird. The long, fibrous, interconnecting root mats of giant reed form a framework for debris dams behind bridges, culverts, and other structures that lead to damage. It ignites easily and can create intense fires. Giant reed can float miles downstream where root and stem fragments may take root and initiate new infestations. Due to its rapid growth rate and vegetative reproduction, it is able to quickly invade new areas and form pure stands at the expense of other species. Once established, giant reed has the ability to out-compete and completely suppress native vegetation.

Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Mowing; repeat mowing will be necessary and small fragments of plants can regenerate.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate. Apply to clumps of giant reed, after flowering (September or October with multiple applications to re-growth), either as a cut stump treatment or as a foliar spray. Prescribed burning, either alone or combined with herbicide applications, may be effective if conducted after flowering. Once giant reed has been reduced sufficiently, native plants may be seeded or transplanted at the treated site. Follow label and state requirements.

References: www.forestimages.org, <http://plants.usda.gov>, www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/ardo1.htm, www.vnps.org/invasive/FSARUN.html, www.invasivespecies.gov/profiles/giantreed.shtml, Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests, James H. Miller, 2003, p. 47