

Invading Plant Species

There are a number of invasive plant species that pose serious problems in Ontario, mainly because of their propensity to spread quickly and out-compete native species for water and nutrients. However, I'd like to focus on two species which I've noticed are most prevalent around Kahshe and Bass lakes: Invasive Phragmites and Japanese Knotweed. The majority of this article was cut and pasted from the website www.invadingspecies.com; I recommend that you take some time and check out the parts I didn't plagiarize.

Invasive Phragmites

I made a noun out of the adjective *Invasive* when referring to Phragmites as there is a native Phragmites which is also quite common and being native, isn't a problem. Invasive Phragmites is a perennial grass that has been damaging ecosystems in Ontario for decades. It releases toxins from its roots into the soil to hinder the growth of and kill surrounding plants. While it prefers areas of standing water, its roots can grow to extreme lengths, allowing it to survive in relatively dry areas.

Identifying Phragmites

I'm sure you've all seen Invasive Phragmites; it's that tall plant with the feathery seed heads that grows in the ditches and along the roadsides where cattails used to. Before a patch has taken over an area and the plants haven't produced seedheads identifying Invasive versus native Phragmites is difficult. Generally, native Phragmites does not grow as tall as the invasive plant and the leaves are narrower. The following information can help in identifying Invasive Phragmites.



Invasive Phragmites	Native Phragmites
Grows in stands that can be extremely dense with as many as 200 stems per square metre.	Grows in stands that are usually not as dense as the invasive plant.
Can grow so densely that it crowds out other species.	Well-established stands are frequently mixed with other plants.
Has stems that are tan or beige in colour with blue-green leaves and large, dense seedheads.	Usually has more reddish-brown stems, yellow-green leaves and smaller, sparser seedheads.
Can reach heights of up to 5 metres (15 feet).	Usually tops out at 1 - 2 metres.

Japanese Knotweed

Japanese Knotweed (sometimes called *Inch-A-Day*) is an aggressive semi-woody perennial plant that is native to eastern Asia. It has since spread throughout the United States and Canada. It's often mistaken for bamboo; however, it survives Ontario winters. Japanese Knotweed is especially persistent due to its vigorous root system, which can spread nearly 10 metres from the parent stem and grow through concrete and asphalt. This invader is very persistent and once it becomes established, is difficult to control. It mostly grows in gardens, along roadsides and near old buildings or former building sites.

How to Identify Japanese Knotweed

- Semi-woody perennial plant capable of reaching 1-3 metres in height.
- Stems are round, reddish-purple, smooth and have a bamboo-like appearance.
- Leaves are ovate with a flat base, reaching 3-6 inches long and 2-5 inches wide with pointed tips.
- Flowers are greenish-white.
- Fruit is small and white with wings that help to disperse seeds to new sites.
- Seeds are brown and shiny.



What You Can Do

- If you have these or any invasive species on your property, get rid of it. Management options for control include: mechanical excavation, flooding, herbicide application, and prescribed burning. The most effective approach for most situations is a combination of herbicide application, cutting/rolling and prescribed burning. Herbicide label restrictions may prohibit the use of the herbicide in or over water and sites that are flooded for the entire growing season cannot be controlled using the available herbicides. Speaking from personal experience it is difficult, but it can be done. I had some success with digging up plants, but where I couldn't get the entire roots system, they came back the next year. At least the size and number of plants were easier to deal with using herbicide.
- Do not dispose of invasive plants in the compost pile – discard them in the regular garbage.
- When hiking, prevent the spread of invasive plants and seeds by staying on trails and keeping pets on a leash.
- If you find Invasive Phragmites, Japanese Knotweed, or other invasive species in the wild, contact the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711, or report it on-line at www.invadingspecies.com/report/

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