



Control Options for Reed Canarygrass

General Information

Reed canarygrass is a perennial grass that spreads by rhizomes, as well as seeds, and forms dense stands that exclude most other vegetation. The roots and old plant material form a thick mat which prevents other plants from becoming established.



Manual/Mechanical Techniques

Small stands of reed canarygrass can be controlled through hand removal. Plants should be dug, taking care to remove as much of the root system as can be found. As even small fragments of the rhizomes can resprout, digging is only suitable if the time is taken to get all the roots possible. Plant parts should be disposed of responsibly, as any left in contact with water or moist ground has the potential to resprout.

Covering and mulching has been used with some success to control reed canarygrass. The entire area should be covered with several layers of cardboard and several inches of mulch, or with a heavy woven plastic fabric anchored in place. The covering must be kept in place and intact for at least an entire growing season. The cover must also extend well clear of all sides of the reed canarygrass site, as shoots will grow out from the edges in an attempt to reach light. Any manual control methods will require careful monitoring of the site over multiple seasons to ensure regrowth does not occur.

Chemical Recommendations

Reed canarygrass can be controlled using specific herbicides. Eradication of large infestations will probably require several applications over a few years. When using herbicides, always read and follow label directions for rates, spraying conditions, personal protective equipment and grazing intervals. Do not spray when it is windy or raining, or when rain is forecast. Do not cut sprayed plants for at least 2 weeks after herbicide application. Herbicides should not be sprayed within 60 feet of water bodies and creeks, without further consultation with the Noxious Weed Board. Remember, it is the herbicide applicators responsibility to apply the product in accordance to the instructions on the label.

Glyphosate (marketed as RoundUp and many other brands), mixed to a 2% solution, can be applied to actively growing reed canarygrass before seedhead formation, or in the fall. A nonionic surfactant added to the solution may aid in absorption of the herbicide. Glyphosate will kill other grass and vegetation so care should be taken if used around any desired vegetation.

Imazapyr (brand names Habitat, Arsenal, Groundclear, etc) can also be used to control reed canarygrass, late summer through fall. Follow label instructions for mixing the herbicide. Spray plants until they are just wet.

NEVER apply RoundUp® or other herbicides to standing water unless they are distinctly labeled for aquatic use. Ingredients in non-aquatic products may be toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms. Aquatic formulations of herbicides are generally only available to licensed pesticide applicators in Washington State. If the target plants are immediately adjacent to or are in standing water, a state permit may be required in order to treat those plants with an aquatically approved herbicide.

- **Always read and understand the label of the herbicides you choose to use.**
- **More is NOT better when using herbicides, and may actually hinder the ability of the herbicide to injure the target plant if the solution is too strong. This wastes money and effort and puts more product into the environment than is necessary. ALWAYS follow the recommended rates on the label.**
- **With all herbicides, when you apply them is as important as how you apply them.**

The mention of a specific product brand name in this document is not, and should not be construed as an endorsement or as a recommendation for the use of that product. Herbicide information is taken from the WSU Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook.