PHRAGMITES AUSTRALIS, COMMON REED

Common reed is one of the tallest and toughest grasses in the Great Lakes region. It can grow up to 20 feet high and develop up to 30 feet of roots in one year! While Phragmites may look like just another pretty grass, it’s actually one tough plant. This plant is bad news for marshes in the great lakes, but in some parts of the world, it is considered valuable. No matter how you view it, Phragmites is worthy of a closer look.

A TOWERING PLANT
- Average height is 8-10 feet tall.
- Plants can grow 15-20 feet in a single summer.

About Stems
- New stems grow quickly.
- They are strong and hollow, like a drinking straw.
- They help send oxygen down to plant roots.
- Abandoned stems die and change color from green to tan in the winter.
- They can spread aboveground, underground and in the water.

Strong Base
- Despite its height, most of the plant (nearly 80%) is found below the ground.
- Roots spread horizontally and vertically and can extend 6-8 feet deep.
- Think stands of Phragmites can contain more than 20 stems per square foot.
- Can you imagine how crowded this is?

Aboveground Runners
- Phragmites spreads exんだ through aboveground runners called stolons.
- Thin runners grow on the ground and produce new shoots and roots.
- Runners can grow four inches a day and extend longer than 40 feet!

Rooted Connection
- Phragmites rhizomes are thick, woody underground stems.
- Water, oxygen and nutrients can travel through the rhizomes from stem to stem.
- New shoots and roots grow off of rhizomes every few inches.

Lots of Seeds
- Each stalk produces tens to 2,000 seeds.
- During early fall, seeds are spread by the wind.
- They can float for one or two months, carried by water to new areas.
- Seeds spread and grow in moist soil.

Have you ever been up close and personal with Phragmites? What was your impression?