

Reed Canary-grass

Phalaris arundinacea

Plants · In flower Jun–Aug



Photo by Franz Xaver, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

A tall, vigorous perennial grass of wet ground with broad flat grey-green leaves and a dense, narrow, branched flower head that is purplish when fresh and straw-coloured later. It is easily confused with common reed but flowers earlier, is a brighter green and has a tighter, more spike-like head. It is common along the Nith, ditches and wet meadows.

BEHAVIOUR

It spreads aggressively by rhizome and can form near-monocultures on nutrient-enriched riverbanks and damp meadows, crowding out more diverse wet grassland — a common consequence of fertiliser run-off. It is valuable cover for nesting reed buntings and small mammals, and the dense root mat helps bind and stabilise a bank against erosion.

WHEN TO SEE IT

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Grasses (Poaceae)
HEIGHT	60–200 cm
STATUS	Native; common, and dominant on enriched wet ground

Photo by Franz Xaver, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons