

BIO-HAZARD

Arundo donax

Arundo donax (Giant reed), native to the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, is widespread throughout the subtropical and warm temperate areas of the world and has become one of the world's 100 worst alien invasive species (Global Invasive Species Specialist Group). It was introduced for ornamental purposes and prefers moist, but not wet places (these areas are preferred by the indigenous *Phragmites* where it tends to outcompete *A. donax*).

Identification

Description:

A. donax is a tall erect, perennial reed between 2 to 10 meters high and is one of the largest of the herbaceous grasses.

Leaves:

The leaves are pale green to bluish-green and up to 700mm long x 80mm wide. The nodes vary in length from 12 to 30 cm. The leaves have conspicuous lobes at the base, easily differentiating it from *Phragmites*. The leaf tips are usually soft, unlike *Phragmites* that's leaves are rigid and penetrating.

Flowers:

Cream or brown in colour and spear shaped. The flowers are borne in large plume like terminal panicles throughout the year, but rarely flower above 1000m altitude.



Figure 1: Leaf sheath



Figure 2: Arundo donax infestation

Damage

A. donax rapidly invades riverbanks and roadsides out-competing and suppressing native vegetation. It propagates vegetatively thereby forming large homogenous stands. It also interferes with flood control, increases fire potential and reduces habitat for wildlife.

Control

The most viable method of control appears to be mechanical control. This is done by means of uprooting the plants by hand pulling or digging. Follow up is essential to ensure long-term control.

Contact address

Please report any sightings of *Arundo donax* in and adjacent to the Kruger National Park to:

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