PLANT FACT SHEET

Phragmites australis (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud.

GENUS *Phragmites* **FAMILY** Poaceae

COMMON NAMES Feather Grass, Common Reed, Reed

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Root, Shoots, Seeds, Sap, Cereal, Rhizome, Tea

Young shoots are eaten as a vegetable. They can also be pickled. The young leaves are dried and ground and mixed with cereal flour for dumplings.
Starch can be extracted from the roots. The rhizomes can also be cooked like potatoes.
The stems have been ground into powder for baking. They are also dried and made into a marsh-mellow like snack. The stems exude a sweet gum-like substance that can be eaten.
The seeds can be eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A thick stemmed grass. It keeps growing from year to year from underground creeping stems or rhizomes. The stalks are erect. The stems are about 3 m high and 1 cm across. They have many nodes and are hollow in between these. The leaves are produced all the way up the stem. The leaves are 80 cm long by 4 cm wide. The leaves sheath the base. The blade is flat or slightly rolled inwards. The leaves are smooth underneath. The leaves point upwards and curve over. The flower panicle is about 40 cm long. It is green with purple tones and becomes creamy-white. The spikelets are 1-1.8 cm long.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows on the edges of pools and waterways. It grows in wetlands. It can grow in water up to 2 m deep. It can grow in slightly salty water. It does best in sunny sites and on clay soils. It does best in mud but can grow in sand. It can tolerate frost. It can grow in arid places. In Argentina it grows from sea level to 2,500 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 4-9. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seed or by division of the clump. Seed are difficult and slow to germinate.

NOTES

There are 3 or 4 Phragmites species. It can be invasive.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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