

PEST OF THE MONTH

REED SWEET GRASS (GLYCERIA MAXIMA)

Glyceria is a tall robust perennial grass with lush, light green leaves.

Growing to over two metres tall, it is a particularly aggressive and troublesome plant along aquatic margins and damp pastoral zones where it is capable of forming large dense infestations under favourable conditions that smother other vegetation.

It forms a sprawling mat of rhizomes (underground stems) that can comprise 40-50% of the plants total biomass. In spring and summer, these rhizomes produce vast numbers of shoots that quickly expand the plants size. Growth slows in autumn and stops with the arrival of cool temperatures and frosts.

Glyceria can produce vast numbers of seeds, the majority of which are able to germinate immediately, while others can remain dormant for several years. In dense stands, reproduction seems to be entirely by vegetative means.

Its rate of spread along waterways is accelerated by the movement of farm machinery, vehicles and livestock carrying mud containing seeds or fragments of stems or rhizomes.

A native of Europe and Asia, it was introduced to other countries to provide animal forage in seasonally wet pastures but has since been implicated in cyanide poisoning of stock. It is currently found in the Waikato, Otago, and the Hauraki Plains and is considered a wetland transformer weed of conservation concern because of its impact on wetlands.



Photos: L. Grueber

Known infestations in our region are largely limited to the Upper Buller and Murchison catchments, along with one site in Golden Bay.

If you think you have found this grass, please contact a Biosecurity Officer at (03) 543 8400.