

Common Reed

Phragmites australis

Plants · In flower Aug–Oct · stems stand all winter



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A tall, robust perennial grass forming dense beds in shallow water and marshy ground, with broad grey-green leaves and soft purplish feathery flower plumes in late summer that fade to buff and persist all winter. Common reed builds the reedbeds of the Solway marshes and loch margins around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

It spreads by thick rhizomes that grow out into open water, so a reedbed advances steadily and can convert open water to fen over time. Reedbed is a habitat in its own right, holding reed buntings, sedge and reed warblers, water rail and roosting starlings and swallows. Reed has been cut for thatch for millennia, and cutting on rotation is how reedbeds are kept in condition.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Grasses (Poaceae)
HEIGHT	Up to 3.5 m · Britain's tallest grass
STATUS	Native; forms the region's reedbeds

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