



PHRAGMITES AUSTRALIS

Common Reed

A robust perennial, 1.5–3 m high, spreading by stout, creeping rhizomes and stolons. *Culms* erect, rigid, stout, usually unbranched, smooth and without hairs. *Nodes* without hairs, mostly contained within the sheaths. *Leaves* mostly on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* round, closely fitting, the margins overlapping, scale-like towards the base. *Ligule* a dense fringe of short hairs with a tuft of longer hairs on each margin. *Leaf blades* narrowing towards the base and tapering to a fine point at the tip, flat, 20–60 cm long, 10–30 mm wide, tough, smooth, without hairs, at maturity breaking from the sheaths.

Inflorescence dense, slightly nodding, 15–40 cm long, soft, brown to purplish, the branches numerous and without hairs. *Spikelets* (S) on short, fine pedicels, towards maturity opening up and displaying a mass of dense, soft hairs, 12–17 mm long, the axis of the spikelet densely clothed in long, silky hairs, breaking up at maturity above the glumes into the individual florets. *Florets* 2–6, the lowest floret male, the others bisexual, similar in size and shape. *Glumes* (G₁, G₂) membranous, 3-nerved, the tips produced into short points, unequal; the lower glume (G₁) 5 mm long, $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of upper (G₂). *Lemmas* (L) 3-nerved, membranous, acutely pointed, 12 mm long. *Palea* (P) small, $\frac{1}{5}$ the length of the lemma, 2-nerved and 2-keeled. *Anthers* 3, 1.5 mm long.

The grass is found in swamps and along the banks of rivers and streams, where it may be a useful bank-stabilizing grass. It used to be a common thatching material.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902), p. 1901 (as *P. communis*); Gardner (1952), pp. 131–33; Burbidge and Gray (1970), p. 22; Willis (1970), pp. 167–68; Beadle *et al.* (1972), p. 641; Black (1978), p. 113; Jessop (1981), p. 438.

KEY TO SPECIES

Only one species occurs in southern Queensland.