Pest of the month

Protecting our wetlands from pest plants

Protection of natural wetlands is an important outcome from the new Tasman-Nelson Regional Pest Management Strategy. This strategy includes two similar grasses that can invade wetlands, but only occur in limited locations.

Reed Sweet Grass (Glyceria Maxima)

This is a tall grass on the edge of wetlands growing up to 1.8m tall, with light green leaves up to 50cm long that may be upright or floating. Reed Sweet Grass can form dense, impenetrable mats that impede access and drainage, causing silt to accumulate and resulting in flooding. It can smother other vegetation that exists in or near aquatic areas, and downgrade the habitat for aquatic animals. It has been implicated in the poisoning of cattle. It can spread by rhizome fragments or by seed in mud on machinery, footwear, livestock, or in water.

Reed Canary Grass (Phalaris Arundinacea)

This is a tall, perennial grass often found on the edge of water bodies, and growing up to 2m tall, with leaves up to 0.5m long. It also has the potential to invade wetlands, where it forms dense sprawling stands up to a metre tall that smother and impede regeneration of other vegetation. It can spread by rhizome fragments or by seed in mud on machinery, footwear, livestock, or in water.

Biosecurity staff will be checking areas at risk from infestation for these two pest plants and would welcome information from the public on known infestations throughout the region. Distribution of these pest plants is currently limited and its classification in the strategy as a progressive control pest is expected to provide sufficient protection for remnant wetlands.

If you have information please contact Tasman District Council.