



Care notes, common reed, *Phragmites australis*

Thank you for volunteering to care for some potted reed. The rhizome you have taken on may not look too promising, but with a little luck and care your charge will flourish and will in the future be a welcome transplant into a new reedbed.

At 1.5m -3m high, common reed is Britain's tallest native grass. It is perennial, flood tolerant and found in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. One of its chief means of spread is by stout, creeping rhizomes.

The potted rhizome cuttings have been harvested from a small, dry reedbed adjacent to Ely Pits & Meadows SSSI. It is planned to lower the bed of this reedbed so that it retains shallow water a few inches deep. As such we are making use of rhizomes that would otherwise be displaced.

- For ease of watering it is recommended that potted reed is placed within a deep tray. Alternatively, you may wish to keep the pot in a lined trench in a border or vegetable patch, to which water can be added as required.
- **Please do not keep the reed within garden ponds.** If kept in garden ponds the reed / its pot may inadvertently harbour unwanted

ornamental plants which could then be transferred when the reed is eventually planted into new reedbeds.

- While the reed is establishing place it in the garden / cool greenhouse out of direct sun. So that rhizomes don't rot during the first weeks of establishment keep damp rather than saturated. If you do stand the pots in water at this stage ensure it is shallow so the majority of the soil is above water level.
- Once the reed is established and actively growing, move the pot into an open site offering as much sun as possible. At this stage the reed will be able to tolerate saturated conditions. Permanent dampness is all that is required to obtain good growth.
- Once the reed out grows the pot with which it was provided, pot it on into a larger container or divide with a spade and pot up the separate new plants.

The success of rhizomes cuttings harvested during April is not guaranteed. If you do have a failure don't take it personally, it was probably a poor cutting! There may be other opportunities to take established cuttings from other carers with several pots; please keep in touch with the LCPRE.

