

January 2018 Plant of the Month



Calamagrostis epigeios (L.) Roth Chee Reedgrass

Introduced plants are a hall mark of New Jersey's flora, with a significant proportion of our species having their origins somewhere other than our State. The January 2018 *Plant of the Month* describes such an introduced plant. The January plant is a perennial grass that is spreading throughout New Jersey. *Calamagrostis epigeios* is an introduced grass with origins in Europe and Asia. Mary Hough(1983) does not list this plant, and the USDA Plants Database identifies known populations only in Hudson and Passaic counties. Recent discoveries in Gloucester and Salem counties extends that range, and indicates an overlooked species in the Coastal Plain. Fernald (1950) identifies chee reedgrass as a perennial of waste places with a local distribution on Long Island. It appears from the anecdotal information provided in historic texts and collections that plant is starting to spread from its once-local population.

This introduction sequence is a common feature of new species. They get introduced by a variety of means such as international commerce, long distance travel by land vehicles, and animals. Once established, they build a presence, and increase the local plant numbers. This increases the seed production and provides the opportunity for expansion from the original point of introduction. It appears that was the sequence of events for the new Gloucester and Salem county populations. Each are found along power line rights of way that are receiving long overdue maintenance. Travel up and down the various corridors provides the opportunity to cross paths with mature chee reedgrass colonies.

The genus *Calamagrostis* is a member of the grass family Poaceae, tribe Poeae (Agrostideae). Chee reedgrass is a plant of open moist to wet habitats, and in some portions of its distribution, this includes salt marshes. It's use in Europe includes pasture and erosion control. It is used in the nursery industry in North America.