



Invasive Plant Alert¹

Arrow Bamboo

Pseudosasa japonica (Siebold & Zucc. ex Steud.) Makino ex Nakai

Also known as slash bamboo or metake, *Pseudosasa japonica* is considered invasive in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia.



Figure 1 Dense clump. Photo: Kenpei, Osaka, Japan, Wikimedia commons.

Where to Look

Arrow bamboo can grow in a variety of soils, making it a popular cultivar. Often found in moist, well-drained soils but tolerant of a wide range of light conditions. Planted stands of this bamboo can spread to adjacent areas, growing into dense thickets that prevent other plants from growing.

This species is native to Japan and Korea, first introduced in 1850 as an ornamental. Scattered populations have been found from Connecticut south to North Carolina, as well as in Florida and

California. In our region it has been found in Rock Creek Park.

Identifying the Plant

Arrow Bamboo is an evergreen perennial grass that spreads by underground rhizomes. The woody, hollow, jointed stems (culms) can be 0.5 inch in diameter and as high as 16 feet. The large, tough, glossy leaves grow to 1 ft long by 1.5 inches wide, tapering to a pointed tip. The flowers are not showy.



Figure 2 Leaf base. Photo: Sten Porse, Wikimedia Commons.

Because flowering in this species is infrequent and unpredictable the threat of spreading by seed is unknown.

Arrow bamboo looks similar to other large grasses, in particular the native *Arundinaria sp.* However, arrow bamboo has one main branch per node while other species have more branches per node. Also, the branches and leaves are large relative to the culm size in comparison to *Arundinaria sp.* In addition, arrow bamboo has long (2-4 mm)

inner ligules, the outgrowths at the junctions between leaf blade and stem.



Figure 1 One main branch per node. Photo: Kenpei, Osaka, Japan, Wikimedia Commons.

How to get rid of it?

Plant native cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) rather than non-native bamboos. Control is difficult. Mowing plants, pulling by hand, or creating an underground barrier to rhizome spread can prevent proliferation in adjacent areas. However, herbicide treatment after cutting in the spring, such as with glyphosphate, is much more effective because it kills the entire plant, including the roots. No biological controls have been found for this plant.

Resources

Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, 4th ed. (2010). <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/bamboos.htm>

USDA Weed of the Week (2005) http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/arrow_bamboo.pdf

¹ This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region