



Equisetum
Equisetum hymale

Those tall reed-like plants you are seeing are Equisetum. These horsetails belong to their own class, and are most closely related to ferns. They are native to the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR), and another species, *Equisetum arvense*, is also present on ORR. The Equisetum has been around for millions of years and is the only one of its kind left. Some of this plant's ancestors are direct contributors to our fossil energy today.

Equisetum spreads vegetatively, and can be quite aggressive. In fact it can be found on all continents, with the exception of Antarctica. For landscaping purposes it should be used with caution and should be carefully contained. The leaves of the plant are located on the joints and are small node-like scales. At certain times cone-like structures (called "strobili") can be seen growing from the tops of the horsetails. These strobili contain reproductive spores. The stems are covered in abrasive silicates, this quality made Equisetum perfect for scouring milk pails or scrubbing pans. Which has given the plant another common name—scouring rush. The stems are also hollow and photosynthetic which is important because the leaves are usually non-photosynthetic.

Other common names that Equisetum has developed over the years are: bottlebrush, pewterwort, and paddock-pipes. Another nickname for the plant has developed right here at ORNL; "ugly grass". Whatever you call it, you're seeing an interesting landscape link between our federal energy mission and our energy heritage.

