



## Narrow-leaved Cattail *Typha angustifolia* L.

**Common Names:** cattail, narrow-leaved cattail, narrow-leaf cattail, narrowleaved cattail

**Native Origin:** Eurasia

**Description:** An erect aquatic freshwater perennial in the cat-tail family (*Typhaceae*) growing 3 to 6 feet tall. Long linear leaves emerge in spring. Leaves are 2 to 5 feet long, very narrow, and flattened. Flowers mature in mid summer and are comprised of velvety brown, cigar-shaped spikes 2 to 6 inches long with a gap between the male and female flowers (common cattail *Typha latifolia* has no gap). The male flowers are produced above the female spike, which forms a thick brown dense mass, later breaking up and allowing the fruits to disperse by wind. One plant can produce approximately 250,000 soft downy seeds in the fall. Seeds can remain viable in the seed-bank for up to 100 years. It reproduces by seeds and by thick, rapidly spreading, lateral rhizomes.



**Habitat:** It is located in wetlands, lakeshores, river backwaters, road sides, ditches, disturbed wet areas, bogs, fresh or brackish marshes, lakes, and ponds. It can thrive in nutrient rich or slightly saline soils. It is generally not shade tolerant.



**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map.

**Ecological Impacts:** Narrow-leaved cattail is considered a riparian dominance type that limits biodiversity in many wetland areas. Roots produce dense rhizome mats and clustered leaves produce a thick litter layer that may reduce the opportunity for other plants to establish or survive. Many wetland areas that once contained a diverse habitat for wetland wildlife now have solid stands of cattails. An Indiana study concluded that the three basic events precede the growth of cattails monocultures: 1) modified surface hydrology, 2) wildfire suppression, and 3) wetland enrichment.

**Control and Management:** Narrow-leaved cattail control is an important consideration for natural areas. The goal of cattail management should be to control the spread and density. Some sources suggest a mix of 50 percent vegetation and 50 percent open water to allow for species diversity and wildlife habitat. Management should be site specific and depend on the hydrologic state of the site, the area's size, and whether water levels can be altered. (Czarapata, 2005)

### • Manual-

- High water levels and flooding – maintain water levels at 47 inches or deeper to prevent establishment because dryer conditions allow spreading
- hand or mechanical cut during a drawdown period in late summer or early fall followed by submergence (3 inches) of stems results in high control
- control burn- burn during drought periods will help in litter cleanup but will not kill all rhizomes
- grazing- it is eaten by waterfowl and muskrats

• **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as Imazapyr, 2,4-D, and glyphosate approved for aquatic applications. Select wick, broom, or hand-spray applications in mid-to late summer, followed by cutting and removing dead stems approximately a week later. Retreatment may be necessary due to the massive root system. Follow label and state requirements.

**References:** <http://plants.usda.gov>, [www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/graminoid/typhang/all.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/graminoid/typhang/all.html), [www.mobot.org/plantscience/ResBot/flor/WNY-Niag/typhangu.jpg](http://www.mobot.org/plantscience/ResBot/flor/WNY-Niag/typhangu.jpg)

[www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/wildflowers/typha\\_angustifolia.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/wildflowers/typha_angustifolia.html)

Czarapata, Elizabeth J. Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control, 2005 p. 80-83, [http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/typh\\_sp.html](http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/typh_sp.html)