



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Cattail (*Typha latifolia*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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**Tourism and Business Development College of Business,
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at**

<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program

<https://www.GORPguide.org>

For more information about the GORP training program see:

<https://www.gorpguide.org/become-a-gorp-certified-guide>

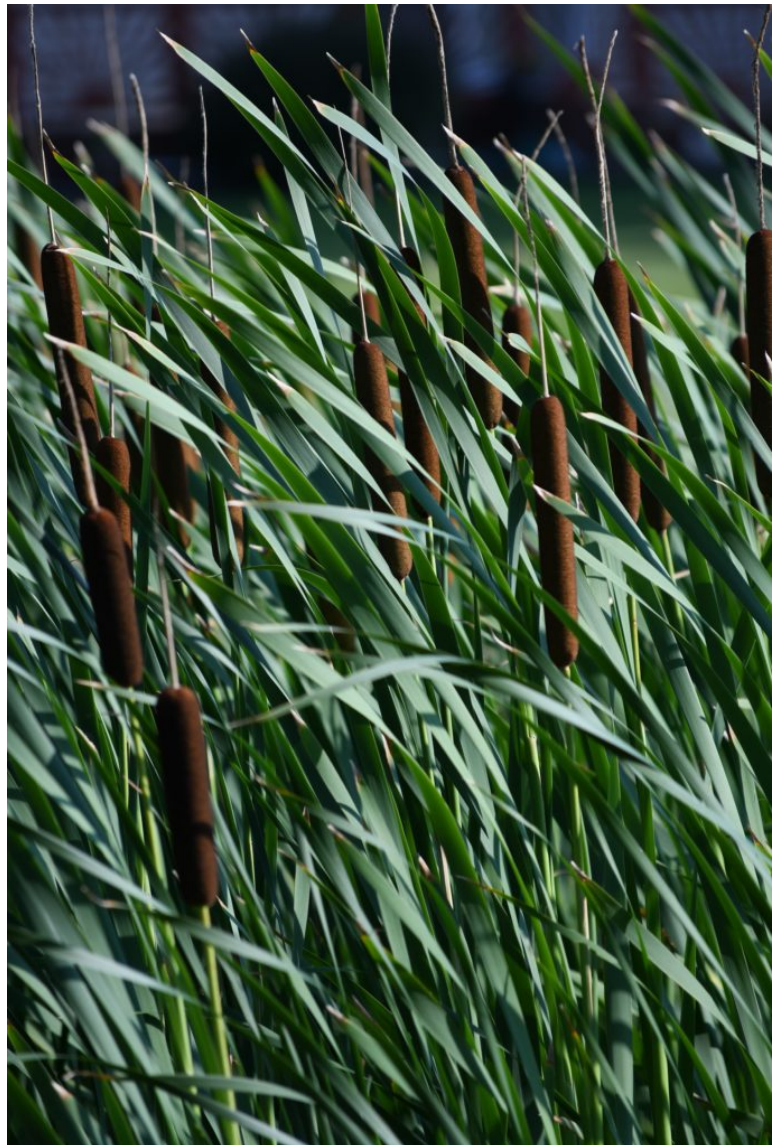
Common Cattail (*Typha latifolia*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/common-cattail-typha-latifolia/

By colliek2

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Cattails can be found just about anywhere there is a bit of damp muddy soil. The Common Cattail, *Typha latifolia*, can be found across the entire temperate northern hemisphere in a variety of wetland habitats.



A legendary resource

Is the Common Cattail a friend of mankind? What makes this tall marshy plant, with graceful dark green lance-shaped leaves, and a weird fruiting stalk (that looks like a hotdog skewered length-wise) a hero?

Yes! The lowly cattail has repeatedly earned legendary status in history as a:

- **Food source** (from rhizomes to seed). Records show cattails being used as a food source in Europe over 30,000 years ago.
- **Medicines** (for cuts, burns, stings, and bruises plus internal issues) and medical supplies (like bandages) and bug repellent
- **Building** and thermal insulation materials (for furniture, rafts, and houses)
- **Water cleaner** (known to remove arsenic, lead, and pesticides from water)
- **Household** needs (like mats, blankets, paper, diapers, bedding, fire wicks, water resistant bags and clothing)

Cattails came to the rescue in World War II. Cattail seed fluff replaced the buoyant filler material used in life vests and aviation jackets called Kapok. Tests confirmed that buoyancy was effective after 100 hours of submersion.

Uses Today

- Decorative paper fibers
- Clothing textiles
- Biofuel and in the production of ethanol
- Floral design and creative arts
- Pickles

Pickles? Cattail pickles, sound fun. Get a recipe from the Northwest Forager at <https://thenorthwestforager.com/2015/04/27/cattail-pickles/>

Note: Cattail rhizomes can form thick underwater mats and control may be difficult. Do not confuse Cattails with the lookalike plant *Iris pseudacorus*, or Yellow Flag Iris. Iris rhizomes are an aquatic invasive plant in many areas. They form a very thick mat, interfere with water systems, and have a pretty yellow bloom.



The brown bloom stock disintegrates into a loose fluffy blob of seeds that are disbursed by the wind.