

# Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

## Narrow-leaved cattail

*Typha angustifolia*



Richard Old  
[www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)

### Description:

Narrow-leaved cattail is typically three to five feet tall, with long, stiff leaves 1/4 to 1/2 inch in wide. Flowers form a dense cylindrical "spike" at the top of the plant and typically the male and female flowers are separated.

### Biology and Spread:

Seeds are small, dry and wind dispersed. One plant can produce over 200,000 seeds per year. In addition, this species is rhizomatous, forming clones. Seeds of this species can remain viable within the soil up to 100 years.

### Background:

It is believed that this species was introduced from Europe in the ballast of European ships. It was found occurring first in coastal locations then spreading to inland habitats.

### Range:

Originally native to Europe, this species can now be found in almost every U.S. state. Similarly, it has been found in most southeast Pennsylvania counties and in most of the western half of the state.



David G. Smith  
[www.delawarewildflowers.org](http://www.delawarewildflowers.org)

### Ecological Threat:

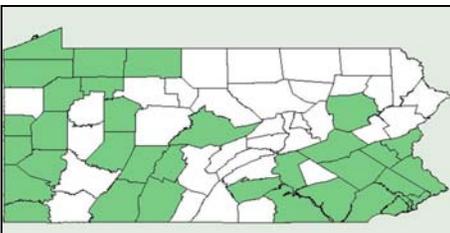
This species quickly spreads in open, wet mineral soils and can quickly out-compete native plants in aquatic, wetland habitats.



Robert W. Freckmann  
<http://wisplants.uwsp.edu>

### Habitat:

This species prefers wet meadows, shores, marshes and ditches often in calcareous habitats. Some evidence suggests that this species can colonize roadside areas as well.



Map courtesy of [USDA PLANTS Database](http://USDA PLANTS Database)

## How to Control this Species:

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Depending on the characteristics of each site, a variety of control measures can be used to limit the spread of narrow-leaved cattails. Often if water levels can be manipulated in conjunction with cutting or mechanical removal, narrow-leaved cattail can be controlled.

Treatment with chemical control agents is possible; however extreme care must be taken in applying herbicides to wetland habitats. Be sure to use herbicides that readily break down in water and are not harmful to other aquatic plants or animals.

## Look-A-Likes:

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This species looks very similar to the native common cattail (*Typha latifolia*), but the common cattail has wider leaves (1/2 to 1 inch wide) and no gap exists on the stem between male and female flowers. A hybrid between the two species (*Typha x glauca*) is also present in scattered locations. This hybrid species can be difficult to identify, as it often can exhibit characteristics of both the common and narrow-leaved cattails.

Fire has been used to control narrow-leaved cattail, but rhizomes must be burned or re-sprouting following fire will occur.

More information can be found at:

Exotic Plant Pest Tutorial:  
[http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/cattail\\_M\\_C.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/cattail_M_C.htm)

USDA Forest Service Fire Effects Information System:  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/graminoid/typang/all.html>

## References:

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Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources:  
[http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/narrow\\_cattail.htm](http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/narrow_cattail.htm)

USDA PLANTS Database:  
<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=TYAN>

Rhoads, A.F. & Block, T.A. 2007. *The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual*. 2nd ed. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA.

## For More Information:

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To learn more about invasive species in Pennsylvania, check out the following site:

DCNR Invasive Species Site: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/conservationscience/invasivespecies/index.htm>

## Native Alternatives:

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The best native alternative for narrow-leaved cattail is the native common cattail (*Typha latifolia*).



Graves Lovell  
[www.forestryimages.com](http://www.forestryimages.com)