

# Prairie Fen Companion *Plant facts*

## Cattail

# *Typha* species



C=1  
Cattail  
Flowers not  
readily obvious



**Plant type:** Cattail.

**Bloom period:** Large, brown cylindrical seed heads mature from August to September at the top of round stalks.

**Distinguishing characteristics:** Plants are 1-5 feet tall, with long, narrow, green leaves that have parallel veins and fan out from a central core. There are two different species of cattail in Michigan: broadleaf cattail (*Typha latifolia*) is considered native to the contiguous U.S. and the narrowleaf cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) is not. They hybridize readily (into *Typha x glauca*) and many of the plants with characteristics of broadleaf cattail have been found to have a large percent of genetic material matching narrowleaf cattail. Both species have the dense, brown cylindrical seed heads at the top of strong stalks in the fall. These species spread readily by rhizomes (horizontal stems that grow underground, sending out roots and shoots), and grow in groups.

### Where can you find this plant?



**Note:** No distribution maps by state since there are multiple species represented.

**Habitat quality:** These species do not tolerate dense shade and become more common in areas that are cleared of shrubs. If cattail establishes in your fen, we recommend watching it carefully and treating it as a non-native invasive if it spreads. The hybrid and narrowleaf cattails are likely to become a dominant plant in prairie fen and push out native species if not managed using herbicide. More information may be found at [http://wiki.bugwood.org/Typha\\_spp](http://wiki.bugwood.org/Typha_spp).

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The Stewardship Network

Developed by: Doug Landis and Anna Fiedler, MSU Department of Entomology. Funding support: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Lynn and Thelma MacCready Forest and Wildlife Endowment, MSU, and Hanes Trust of the Michigan Botanical Club. Partners: The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, The Stewardship Network, Michigan DNR Landowner Incentive Program. For more information on native plants and prairie fens, go to [www.nativeplants.msu.edu](http://www.nativeplants.msu.edu).

## Key description

### C=

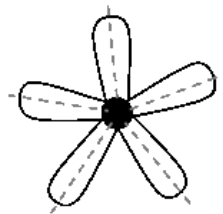
Coefficient of conservatism. This is a value that ranges from 0 for non-native invasives to 10 for plants that would only be expected to be found in undisturbed, high quality plant communities. It is a general guideline for whether the plant would be likely to be found in an intact prairie fen (not filled in with shrubs and without invasive species). However, C values may be high for some species that are not found in prairie fen but would be part of another wetland such as a marsh. They are included here because they are a widely accepted measure of habitat quality in the Midwest (<http://1.usa.gov/FQAMethod>).

### Flower type

Classifications here follow those of Newcomb's wildflower guide (<http://amzn.com/0316604429>).

### Number of regular parts

The flower has this number of petals or petal-like parts that are symmetrical from the flower center (radial), with each similar to the other in shape, size, and color. There may be 3 to 7 regular parts. See image at right.



### Aster

These flowers have regular parts and are symmetrical from the center, but there are more than 7. Asters have a set of disc flowers in the center of the flower and a set of ray flowers outside of the disc flowers, often called petals. They are one group (genus) within the family Asteraceae, and there are many species in this genus.

### Flowers not readily obvious

The flowers of plants such as grasses, sedges, and cattail are not obvious and are often confused with the fruits (seeds) of these species. While this website does not include flower descriptions for these species, they do flower.

### Irregular

The flower is not symmetrical from the center but is symmetrical down a line (bilateral). See image at right.



### No flowers

A number of primitive plants, including ferns, do not flower but make spores in order to reproduce.

### Parts indistinguishable

These species either have parts so small their number is difficult to determine or have no petal-like parts. This group includes goldenrods, other species with small individual flowers, and plants in the family Asteraceae that have more than 7 parts, but the parts do not form distinguishable, symmetrical ray flowers (which are often called petals).