INVASIVE PLANTS OF OHIO

Fact Sheet 11

Narrow-leaved and Hybrid Cattail

Typha angustifolia, T. Xglauca

DESCRIPTION:

Narrow-leaved cattail is a non-native, invasive plant that hybridizes with the native broad-leaved cattail (*T. latifolia*) to produce the invasive *T.* x*glauca*. All three aquatic perennials may grow up to a height of 10 feet and produce a velvety brown spike of flowers. The flower head of the hybrid and the narrow-leaved cattail have a gap of 1-4 inches between the male and female flowers, while the native species has both flower types next to each other. The leaves of cattail originate from the base and spread outward. The narrow-leaved and hybrid cattails have leaves that are ¼ -¾ inch across; the native cattail's leaves are wider at ½ -1 inch. A starchy rhizome forms beneath each plant.

Narrow-leaved (Left) and Broad-leaved (Right) Cattail Division Photo

HABITAT:

Stands of cattail can be found in a wide variety of wetland habitats, including marshes, lakeshores, river backwaters and roadside ditches. This prolific plant can grow in disturbed areas, as well as brackish, and polluted waters of depths nearing 3 feet.

Cattail infestation Division Photo

DISTRIBUTION:

Narrow-leaved cattails are believed to have been introduced to the Atlantic seaboard from the dry ballast of European ships. This plant has since spread westward and occurs throughout much of the United States. The hybrid cattail is concentrated in the northeast, but may occur wherever both the native and the narrow-leaved species are present. All three taxa are found throughout Ohio.

PROBLEM:

Narrow-leaved and hybrid cattail will out-compete native plants in wetland systems. These plants establish dense monocultures that enable them to shade out native vegetation. They are also thought to be allelopathic, producing chemicals which discourage growth of other plant species. Cattails reproduce both vegetatively by rhizomes and sexually through massive amounts of seed.

CONTROL:

Mechanical: Manipulation of water levels can kill cattails by inhibiting airflow from the cattail shoots to the roots. Removing the dead leaves and submerging the shoots in early spring will eliminate gas diffusion and "suffocate" the plant. In situations where water level manipulations are either not feasible or appropriate, pulling, cutting and bulldozing treatments have been used with some success. In the case of bulldozing, the benefits in effective removal may not outweigh the costs of disturbing the wetland.

Chemical: Wick and foliar applications of systemic herbicides such as Accord®, Rodeo® or Glypro® followed by manual clipping and removal of stems can be successful. Re-treatments are usually necessary due to the extensive root system.

Biological: Currently there are no biological control methods for cattails.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SOURCES:

Hoffman, R. and K. Kearns, eds. 1997. Wisconsin Manual of Control Recommendations for Ecologically Invasive Plants. Bureau of Endangered Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Grace, J.B. and J.S. Harrison. 1986. The Biology of Canadian Weeds: *Typha latifolia* L., *T. angustifolia* L. and *T.* x*glauca* Godr. Canadian Journal of Plant Science 66: 361-379.

Motivans, K. and S. Apfelbaum. 1987. Element Stewardship Abstract for *Typha* spp. The Nature Conservancy.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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