

# MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Abundant Cattail Growth

Prepared for Landowners | By Christa Brown | 2024

This document is intended to provide general management recommendations with associated references. It is not exhaustive or intended to be prescriptive.

## CATTAILS

A small area of cattails can be visually pleasing as well as provide fish and wildlife habitat. However, cattails rapidly spread through their seeds and roots and without consistent management, in just a few short years cattails can ‘take over’ shallow water areas.

## BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

### For new growth/saplings:

- **Pulling**

New growth in cattails can be managed easily by pulling once the plant is about 6 inches above the surface of the water. The best practice is to pull the entire plant out from the root system down into the water bottom in order to limit regrowth from the roots. Generally, the success of this management practice is dependent on the consistency of upkeep to pull out new growth throughout the entire growing season.

### For mature cattails:

- **Chemical application**

Chemical control is the most common and most effective way to manage large overgrowth of cattails. This typically requires less persistent management and can even accomplish complete mitigation of cattails in one application. It is important to remember that with chemical use, the product label should be read carefully and all application and safety instructions are followed.

The highest recommended chemical to use on cattails is glyphosate. Some common product names include Roundup, Rodeo, Aquamaster, and others. This is a systemic herbicide and it will travel through the plant killing both the roots and the foliage. The best application technique is to apply the glyphosate liberally to the exposed cattails above the water from any direction.





Photo by Holly Mandarich/Unsplash

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In addition, glyphosate works best when a nonionic surfactant, like Plex Mate, is added to the solution prior to spraying. This will improve the cover of the herbicide over the vegetation and the plant uptake of the chemical especially because cattails have a thick waxy coating on their leaves that often shed liquid droplets immediately. The general recommended ratio is one ounce of surfactant to each gallon of glyphosate spray solution.

The best time of year to spray cattails is late summer and fall when the nutrients are being focused back into their roots. Application of glyphosate after the seed head has formed on the cattails sends this chemical to the roots and kills the plant for the coming growing season.

If you are needing to manage your cattails before the fall, it is recommended to cut down the cattails often through the season to avoid spreading and then spray in the fall to kill the plant entirely. Cattails will continue to grow through the season from cuts so this will be a repeated process. Once they are sprayed however, this will eliminate the entire stand of cattails that are present and this consistent cutting will not be necessary the next year.

Some management practices include burning the stands in the spring. This should be done carefully and while following all laws with active management at the time of burning. This will not eliminate new cattail growth for the season but will eliminate the previous year's growth. Chemical spray at the end of the growing season in the fall is still recommended to mitigate abundant cattail growth.

## REFERENCES

AgriLife Extension Texas A&M. (2024) *How to Control Cattail*. <https://aquaplant.tamu.edu/management-options/cattail/>

Lynch Jr., W. (2002) *Ohio State Extension Fact Sheet: Cattail Management*. [https://woodlandstewards.osu.edu/sites/woodlands/files/imce/0011\\_o.pdf](https://woodlandstewards.osu.edu/sites/woodlands/files/imce/0011_o.pdf)

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