Typha latifolia

[Synonyms : *Massula latifolia*, *Typha ambigua*, *Typha angustifolia* var. *inaequalis*, *Typha angustifolia* var. *media*, *Typha angustifolia* var. *sonderi*, *Typha crassa*, *Typha elongata*, *Typha engelmannii*, *Typha intermedia*, *Typha latifolia* var. *ambigua*, *Typha latifolia* var. *angustifolia*, *Typha latifolia* forma *divisa*, *Typha latifolia* var. *elata*, *Typha latifolia* var. *elatior*, *Typha latifolia* var. *elongata*, *Typha latifolia* var. *gracilis*, *Typha latifolia* forma *latifolia*, *Typha latifolia* var. *obconica*, *Typha latifolia* var. *remotiuscula*, *Typha latifolia* var. *typica*, *Typha major*, *Typha palustris*, *Typha pendula*, *Typha remotiuscula*, *Typha spathulifolia*]

REEDMACE is a deciduous aquatic perennial. Native to Europe, Asia and North America, it has yellowish descending to brownish bulrush-like heads.

It is also known as *Anea* (Spanish), Asparagus of the Cossacks, Baccobolts, *Bardi* (Arabic), *Bayón* (Spanish), Beetle, Blackamoor, Black beads, Black cap, Black heads, *Bredbladet Dunhammer* (Danish), *Bredkaveldun* (Swedish), *Breitblättriger-Rohrkolben* (German), Broadleaf cattail, *Buda rqieqa* (Maltese), Bubrush, Bullrush, Bull segg, Bulrush, Bulrush reedmace, Candlewick, Cat-o'-nine-tails, Cat's tail, Cattail flag, Common bulrush, Common cattail, Cooper's reed, Cossack asparagus, *Cynffon-y-Gath* (Welsh), Deer marsh grass, Dod, *Enea* (Spanish), *Espadaña* (Spanish), Flag grass, Flag tule, Flat rush, Flaxtail, Foxtail, Great reedmace, *Hawahawa* (Pawnee North American Indian), Indian leek, Indian onion, *Kaveldun* (Swedish), *Kirit-tacharush* (Pawnee North American Indian), *Ksho-hi* (Winnebago North American Indian), *Lisdodde* (Dutch), Mace-reed, March beetle, Marsh beetle, Marsh pestle, *Massette* (French), *Massette à feuilles larges* (French), *Murrão-dos-fogueteiros* (Portuguese), Nailrod, *Orobinec širokolistý* (Czech), *Orobinec širolistý* (Czech), *Osmankäämi* (Finnish), *Pálka širokolistá* (Slovak), *Papură* (Rumanian), *Pavie* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Quenouille* (French), *Stianca* (Italian), *Suca* (Spanish), *Tabua* (Portuguese), Tule cattail, *Wahab igaskonthe* (Omaha and Ponca North American Indian), Water torch, and *Wihuta-hu* (Dakota North American Indian); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of docility, independence, and indiscretion.

Warning – SEE *Typha* GENUS entry.

Latifolia is made up of Latin *lati-* (broad, wide) and *-folia* (leaved) components.

The stems played an important role in ceremonial rituals performed by the Omaha, Cahuilla and Ponca North American Indian tribes. The plant was also significant for some of the Keresan as it featured in their Rain Dance. Both the pollen and the leaves were used in Navajo ritual and by some of the Apache. Omaha Indians also used the leaves – as did the Cheyenne in their Sun Dance ceremonies. Different parts of the Navajo tribe attributed certain powers to the leaves. One was a belief that they could provide protection from lightning, and another implied a good luck charm for rain.

The Menominee tribe used the root to caulk their boats – Meskwaki Indians used it on their canoes, and the Menominee, like the Chippewa, Isleta, some of the Apache and the Meskwaki Indians also made the leaves into mats for winter roofing. These kept out rain and snow and were stored in Summer for use the following Winter. Some of the Apache tribe covered lodge floors with leaves, and they also provided basketry material for the Squaxin, Cheyenne, Nitinaht, Hesquiat, some of the Paiute, some of the Navajo, the

Snohomish, Chippewa, Cowlitz, Quinault, some of the Salish, the Makah, Chehalis and Klallam tribes.

Leaves, stems and inner bark were used variously by the Yurok, Klallam, Makah, some of the Paiute, the Nimpkish, Snohomish, Chehalis, Cowlitz, Nitinaht, Quinault, Tolowa and Squaxin Indians for making clothing ranging from raincoats and capes to skirts. The same plant parts were also used by many different tribes including the Klallam, Montana Indian, Hopi, Squaxin, some of the Paiute, the Potawatomi, Cahuilla, some of the Salish, some of the Kwakiutl, the Chehalis, Okanagan-Colville, Cowlitz, Shuswap, Menominee, Klamath, Yurok, Quinualt, Chippewa, Snohomish, Nimpkish, Thompson and Makah (the leaves or stems preferred by one tribe and inner bark by another) for making matting.

Many Indian tribes stuffed pillows with the down including the Klamath, Meskwaki, Dakota, Shuswap, some of the Algonkin, the Thompson and Iroquois. The down was also appreciated by several tribes not least the Okanagan-Colville, some of the Dakota, the Thompson, Blackfoot and Pomo as an effective nappy lining for their babies' greater comfort. Stems, leaves and down provided bedding material as well and records show that one or other of the parts was employed this way by the Shuswap, Mendocino Indian, Cahuilla, Montana Indian and Hesquiat tribes.

Apart from basketry, leaves were also used to make various other storage containers such as those made by the Okanagan-Colville Indians for harvested fruit or dried roots. Snohomish Indians managed to develop a coarse sewing thread from the leaves, and some of the Chippewa tribe once used the down as a weapon – they threw it in enemy faces in the belief that this would be blinding.

In North America Indian tribes, including the Costanoan, Blackfoot, some of the Cree, the Tubatulabal, Klallam, Klamath, some of the Paiute, some of the Dakota, the Apache, some of the Keresan, the Montana Indian, Chehalis, Thompson, Mendocino Indian, Pomo and Okanagan-Colville, ground the roots (or baked them) for food and early settlers in the Continent also fed on them. Okanagan-Colville Indians ate the young fruiting heads (boiled or roasted), while the green flower spikes were eaten fresh by some of the Paiute, boiled by the Alaskans, and dried by some of the Chippewa. Gosiute Indians ate roasted seeds, and the Paiute enjoyed them raw – or ground and made into soup, porridge or cakes. The Chehalis tribe baked the inner stalks, the stems were eaten by the Carrier Indians as well as some of the Paiute and Navajo tribes. Stem bases were enjoyed by some of the Navajo, Cree, Tanana and Paiute tribes, and the Yuma Indians and the Mendocino Indian tribe too. Tender shoots were harvested and eaten as a vegetable by some of the Cree, Keresan and Dakota Indians, and by the Pomo, Costanoan, Yuma and Montana Indian tribes. The pollen was also eaten by Costanoan Indians, made into cakes or porridge by the Cahuilla, and used as a flavouring or to make gruel or cakes by the Yuma tribe. For some of the Chippewa and Dakota tribes the pollen was a staple part of their diet – as were the ground dried roots for the Cahuilla. Yuma Indians dried pollen for future use, while some of the Cree dried the roots (especially for Winter food) and some of the Paiute Indians dried the roots and/or seed for later use.

For the North American Iroquois the plant was one of a range of veterinary medicines relied upon for their horses.

Reedmace was also a source of medicine for many Indian tribes especially as a treatment for skin disorders – in which copious records note it was valued by at least the Potawatomi, Micmac, some of the Chippewa, Malecite and Meskwaki Indians for use on adults, and by the Omaha, Winnebago, Plains Indian, Dakota, Pawnee and Ponca tribes for babies as well as older members. The plant offered a disinfectant for some of the Algonkin Indians, and they and the Iroquois, Okanagan-Colville and Cahuilla tribes all applied it to wounds. It was used for burns by the Montana Indian, Winnebago, Dakota, Pawnee, Omaha and

Ponca tribes. Cheyenne Indians used it to treat stomach upsets, the Delaware tribe prescribed it for some kidney disorders, and it was a Washo treatment for diarrhoea. It was also used by the Mahuna during childbirth, Houma Indians turned to it as a remedy for whooping-cough, and the Iroquois valued it as a treatment for venereal diseases.

Reedmace signifies 'the multitude' and 'the faithful' in Christian lore.

On several continents its long flat leaves were used for thatching, and they also provided a material for weaving baskets and mats. They were used by coopers who often put them between cask staves to help prevent leakage. The downy tufts from the heads provided a mattress or pillow stuffing (as well as insulation from the cold) and female flowers provided reliable tinder.

Young fruiting spikes have been roasted and eaten, the young shoots have been cooked like garden asparagus *Asparagus officinalis* and the roots and lower stem have been included in salads or cooked as a vegetable.

Medicinally, herbalists have used the root to treat diarrhoea, dysentery, stomach ailments and some venereal diseases.

It is the birthday flower for 20th July.