

Flower hunting

In this series, student editor and MSc student of Plant Breeding Julia van der Westhuyzen (photos and text) and professor of Plant Ecology Joop Schaminée (stories) go looking for the loveliest campus flora.



Broadleaf cattail

Common name: Broadleaf cattail

Scientific name: *Typha latifolia*

Flowering time: late summer to late autumn

Location on campus: behind Lumen, next to the small pond

‘Two species of this genus are found in the Netherlands: *Typha latifolia* and *Typha angustifolia* – the broadleaf and narrowleaf cattail respectively. Both species are aquatic, but where the broadleaf species lives in swampy ponds, the narrowleaf one is found on the banks of bigger lakes. As is often the case, the etymology of the name is not known. *Typha* may derive from the Greek word *tiphos* (marshland or water body) or from the word *typhe*, which means cattail, referring to the shape of the fruit. Several other colloquial names exist in Dutch such as the *rietsigaar* (reed cigar) or *duivelsknuppel*, which means “devil’s stick”.

‘I have fond memories from my youth of going into wetlands to collect a bunch of reeds and cattails to decorate my room with. The problem is, though, that the brown cylindrical flower heads of this plant produce lots of white fluffy seeds. So after a few weeks, there was fluff throughout our house! My parents never complained. If you visit the Lumen pond, you will see more and more fluff there in the coming weeks too.’