**Typha angustifolia**  
[TY-fuh an-gus-tee-FOH-lee-uh]  
(syn Typha latifolia, Typha orientalis, Typha capensis)

**Family:** Typhaceae  

**Names:** Pu Huang, bulrush; hsiang pu (fragrant rush), small reed mace; Espandana, Lesser Bulrush, Narrowleaf Cattail, Totora; Smalkaveldun, smalbladigt kaveldun (Swedish); Smalt dunkjevle (Norwegian); Smalbladet Dunhammer (Danish); Kapeaosmankäämi (Finnish); Schmalblättriger Rohrkolben (German)

**Description:** A reed type of plant that grows in dense stands along the banks of ponds and streams; the long reddish leaves, grow to 6 feet. Has long flat narrow leaves rising parallel to the stem, a distinctive brown cylindrical head of female flowers, and straw-colored male flowers immediately above. In this species there is no break between the male and female portions of the stem. After the pollen has been shed, the male flowers drop off the stalk. It is hardy to zone 3. It is in flower from June to July. The flowers are monoecious and are pollinated by Wind. It is noted for attracting wildlife.

**Cultivation:** A very easily grown plant, it grows in boggy pond margins or in shallow water up to 15cm deep. It requires a rich soil if it is to do well. Succeeds in sun or part shade. A very invasive plant spreading freely at the roots when in a suitable site, it is not suitable for growing in small areas. Unless restrained by some means, such as a large bottomless container, the plant will soon completely take over a site and will grow into the pond, gradually filling it in. This species will often form an almost complete monoculture in boggy soil. The dense growth provides excellent cover for water fowl. Seed - surface sow in a pot and stand it in 3cm of water. Pot up the young seedlings as soon as possible and, as the plants develop, increase the depth of water. Plant out in summer. Division in spring. Very easy, harvest the young shoots when they are about 10 - 30cm tall, making sure there is at least some root attached, and plant them out into their permanent positions. The pollen is shaken off the blooming plant. When
collecting the medicinal pollen, it becomes mixed with the stamens and hairy sepals of the flowering spike and must be sifted before it is used as medicine. Harvest schedule: winter: starch-filled rootstalks. Look for the brown remnants of leaves and stalks to guide you the nourishing rhizomes. These are a source of white flour. Hornlike growths on these underground stems are a vegetable. Spring: rootstalk sprouts and white core of young stalks. Late spring to early summer: green female flowers, pollen of upper male flowers, and cattail “heart” (starchy ball formed at junction of green stem and white rootstalk). Autumn: rootstalks and rootstalk sprouts.

History: The generic name, *Typha*, comes from the Greek *typhos*, meaning “marsh”, and refers to the natural habitat of the plant. Coopers in Europe traditionally placed the leaves of this plant between the staves of barrels to render them watertight. The pollen is highly flammable and has been used as a combustible agent in fireworks. The root has been eaten as a vegetable in times of famine.

Constituents: Isorhamnetin, pentacosane and plant sterols.

Properties: Anticoagulant; Diuretic; Emmenagogue; Haemostatic; Lithontripic.

Energetics: neutral, sweet

Meridians/Organs Affected: liver, pericardium

Medicinal Uses: In Chinese herbal medicine, the astringent pu huang pollen has been employed chiefly to stop internal or external bleeding. The dried pollen is said to be anticoagulant, but when roasted with charcoal it becomes hemostatic. The pollen may be mixed with honey and applied to wounds and sores, or taken orally to reduce internal bleeding of almost any kind—for example, nosebleeds, uterine bleeding, or blood in the urine. The pollen is now also used in the treatment of angina. Pu huang does not appear to have been used as a medicine in the European herbal tradition. The dregs remaining after the pollen has been sifted from the stamens and sepals can be browned in an oven or hot skillet and then used as an internal or external astringent in dysentery and other forms of bowel hemorrhage. It is used internally in the treatment of kidney stones, internal hemorrhage of almost any kind, painful menstruation, abnormal uterine bleeding, post-partum pains, abscesses and cancer of the lymphatic system. It should not be prescribed for pregnant women. Externally, it is used in the treatment of tapeworms, diarrhea and injuries. An infusion of the root has been used in the treatment of gravel.

TCM: Therapeutic effects: diuretic; hemostatic; astringent; promotes circulation; dissolves clots; balances energy-and-blood circulations

Indications: menorrhagia; dysmenorrhea; abdominal pain after childbirth; chronic liver inflammation and accompanying pain in rib cage; spermatorrhea; pain and pressure in chest; internal hemorrhages due to traumatic injuries; functional disharmony in energy-and-blood circulation

Contraindications: use only as long as required to relieve symptoms

Dosage: decoction: 4-9 grams, in two doses, on an empty stomach

Flower Essence: Indications: weakened by connections and involvements which no longer serve one's highest truth; difficulty standing up for oneself; feeling unsupported by others. Healing Qualities: helps one connect with the personal truth that illuminates one's chosen life path, and with the inner strength to act in alignment with this truth.

Toxicity: Do not take during pregnancy

Ritual Uses: Gender: Masculine. Planet: Mars. Element: Fire. Power: Lust. If a woman doesn’t enjoy sex but wishes to, she should carry some cattail with her at all times.
Other Uses: The stems and leaves have many uses, they make a good thatch, can be used in making paper, can be woven into mats, chairs, hats etc. They are a good source of biomass, making an excellent addition to the compost heap or used as a source of fuel etc. The hairs of the fruits are used for stuffing pillows etc. They have good insulating and buoyancy properties. The female flowers make an excellent tinder and can be lit from the spark of a flint. The pollen is highly inflammable and is used in making fireworks. This plant's extensive root system makes it very good for stabilizing wet banks of rivers, lakes etc.

Culinary Uses: The roots can be boiled and eaten like potatoes or macerated and then boiled to yield a sweet syrup. The roots can also be dried, ground into a powder and then used as a thickener in soups etc or added to cereal flours. Rich in protein, this powder is used to make biscuits etc. To obtain the white flour from the rhizomes, scrub them well and peel away the tough outer rind while still wet. Then pound with a mallet. Place the macerated rootstalk in a jar and cover with water. The four (30% to 46% starch and the same protein contents as rice) will settle to the bottom. The young shoots are gathered in spring and either pickled or steamed as food. The heart of the young plant, which grows in mud at the bottom of ponds, is also used as food, usually steeped raw in vinegar. It is best to remove the outer part of the stem. The young flowering stem can be eaten raw, cooked or made into a soup. It tastes like sweet corn. The seed is cooked. The seed is very small and fiddly to harvest, but it has a pleasant nutty taste when roasted. An edible oil is obtained from the seed. Due to the small size of the seed this is probably not a very worthwhile crop.

The pollen of the male flowers is a fine golden dust, from which the herb takes its Chinese name pu huang, “golden rush,” and is sometimes mixed with honey to be eaten as a sweet. A protein rich additive to flour used in making bread, porridge etc, it can also be eaten with the young flowers, which makes it considerably easier to utilize. The pollen can be harvested by placing the flowering stem over a wide but shallow container and then gently tapping the stem and brushing the pollen off with a fine brush. This will help to pollinate the plant and thereby ensure that both pollen and seeds can be harvested.

Recipes:
Cattail Pollen Cakes
1 cup sifted cattail pollen
1 cup fine white cornmeal or cattail flour
3 tsp finely chopped dried spicebush leaves
1 tbsp honey
2 eggs, beaten lightly
1 ½ cups water or broth
2 Tbsp sunflower seed oil

Thoroughly blend all ingredients together into a smooth batter. On a very hot greased griddle, ladle the batter out into 4 large cakes. Cook for 3-5 minutes, until bubbles form on the surface, then flip and finish cooking. Serve hot with nut butter and maple syrup. (Native Harvests)

Cossack Salad
24 young cattail shoots
1 cup plain yogurt
½ cup mayonnaise
1 Tbsp minced fresh chives
sprinkle of garlic powder
1 ½ tsp minced fresh or ½ tsp dried basil
salt to taste
dash white pepper
1 head Boston or other soft lettuce
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

Trim off and discard the green tops of the cattails, reserving the lower three inches of each shoot. Peel off and discard the outer layers of the reserved shoots to expose the ivory-colored inner stalks. Cut the shoots crosswids

Mid-Spring Wild Blossom Salad
½ cup wild garlic leaves or bulbs
½ cup red or white clover flowers
¼ cup spearmint leaves
2 cups cattail shoots
2 cups violet leaves and flowers
1 cup black locust or wisteria blossoms
Chop the onions, clover, and spearmint finely. Slice the cattails. Chop the violet leaves and mix everything together. (Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places)

References:
Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants

Resources:
Companion Plants, www.companionplants.com

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