

BROADLEAF ARROWHEAD

Sagittaria latifolia



Sagittaria latifolia is a plant found in shallow wetlands and is sometimes known as broadleaf arrowhead, duck-potato, Indian potato, or wapato. Extremely frequent as an emergent plant, broadleaf arrowhead forms dense colonies on very wet soils that become more open as the species mixes with other species of deeper water levels. These colonies form long bands following the curves of rivers, ponds and lakes, well marked by the dark green color of the leaves. The plant has strong roots and can survive through wide variations of the water level, slow currents and waves. It displays an affinity for high levels of phosphates and hard waters.

This plant produces edible tubers that were extensively used by the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. These tubers can be eaten raw or cooked for 15 to 20 minutes. The taste is similar to potatoes and chestnuts, and they can be prepared in the same fashions: roasting, frying, boiling, and so on. They can also be sliced and dried to prepare a flour.

Despite the name Duck Potato, ducks rarely consume the tubers, which are usually buried too deep for them to reach, although they often eat the seeds. Beavers, North American Porcupines, and Muskrats, however, eat the whole plant, tubers included. Other edible parts include late summer buds and fruits.