Advantages and Disadvantages of Cattails in Storm Water Ponds

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	Advantages of Cattails	**Disadvantages of Cattails**
Safety	• Cattails provide a natural barrier and generally deter children and others from unintentionally entering the pond. • Cattails are generally considered less hazardous than rocks as edging, which can become slippery and create risks for slips and falls. • By absorbing pond nutrients, cattails reduce algae growth. Algae can be toxic to people and animals. • Dragonflies and their larvae live in cattails and eat mosquitos.	• Cattails can pose a hindrance for those entering or exiting the pond for recreational use. They can also create a line of sight obstruction. • Cattails are habitats for mosquitos which are a nuisance and can be vectors for diseases such as West Nile.
Public Perception	• Saskatoon citizens have generally been supportive of cattails in storm water ponds. • Use of any herbicide to control cattails can generate public concern.	• The majority of citizens who provided input about the Dundonald storm water pond preferred cattail removal.
Aesthetics	• Some citizens consider cattails to be aesthetically attractive and view them and the habitat they provide for birds as positive contributors to the park ambience. The natural look for ponds is preferred by many people.	• Some citizens do not like the natural look of cattails and consider them weeds. • Dead cattails can be unsightly.
Environment	• Cattails provide natural habitat for birds, muskrats, amphibians, insects, and other wetland species. • Cattails remove phosphorous, nitrogen, and other hazardous elements, thereby providing positive environmental benefits and improved quality for storm water flowing to the river. • By absorbing pond nutrients, cattails reduce algae growth and accompanying algae odours. • Cattails provide carbon sequestration.	• Cattails grow aggressively and can crowd out other native plants and grasses, thereby reducing plant diversity. • Cattails can attract muskrats which some people consider pests because of the damage they can cause to other plants and embankments, and the potential to spread rabies and other diseases. • Cattail decomposition contributes to de-oxygenation of water bodies and methane emissions.

		• Use of herbicides for cattail removal has risks to the environment. Care must be taken to apply approved herbicides in the proper dosage and with other precautions.
Maintenance	• Cattails help to stabilize the shoreline and banks where they grow. • Cattails provide a natural erosion control. • By absorbing pond nutrients, cattails reduce algae growth and odours.	• Cattails can contribute to sedimentation as they die off, and over time impact the storm water pond capacity. • Cattails that are growing in storm water inlet and outlet areas can impede water flow and impact performance of the storm water pond. • Cattails have an underground root system that makes them difficult to remove using non-chemical methods.
Recreation	• Cattails provide passive recreation opportunities for watching birds and other wildlife.	• Cattails can deter access to ponds for permitted recreational activities (i.e. canoeing) if they become too aggressive.
Cost	• Maintaining natural cattail growth minimizes overall storm water pond maintenance costs.	• Cattail control requires contracted resources for removal. Additional costs will be incurred for bird nesting surveys, communication, contract management, and in some cases alternative erosion control measures. • Cattail removal will likely result in more algae growth, which could require resources for additional maintenance. • Cattails are expected to grow back so multiple applications will be necessary for long-term control.