

Cherokee Ethnobiology

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RIVER CANE

Cherokee Usage

River cane has been used for many generations in making arrows, baskets, blowguns, and flutes. River cane is fairly easy to hollow out, generally with a hot iron rod. Another popular use for river cane is cutting lengths of about 7-8 feet long and using as a cane pole to catch panfish.

Description

River cane generally grows from 6-8 feet tall, but can reach heights in excess of 12 feet. River cane can be found growing along many streambanks. River cane is a very strong, lightweight, fibrous plant making this plant good for many uses. This plant rarely blooms and spreads by root production. River cane was once very widespread, but has declined due to cattle grazing and clearing for pasture/cropland development.

Where found: River cane can be found growing near streams in Adair, Cherokee, and Delaware Counties. Large stands still remain on portions of the Illinois River.

Other Name: Giant cane, Switch cane

Taxonomy:

- Kingdom - Plantae
- Phylum - Magnoliophyta
- Class - Liliopsida
- Order - Cyperales
- Family - Poaceae
- Genus — *Arundinaria*
- Species — *gigantea*

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