

Tule Boat Project

by Dino Labiste and Susan Labiste



The following article is a pictorial process of the construction of a tule boat. The main material used is tule, a bulrush of the genus *Schoenoplectus* (formerly *Scirpus*). Tule grows in wetlands or areas of seasonal flooding. The interior of each long tule stem is filled with spongy tissue packed with air cells. It is the pithy interior of the tule stem that makes it such a unique and useful form of water transportation. Tule boats, or tule balsas, were used by California Natives to travel across inlets, deep marshes, lakes and bays.

A core of willow saplings provided shape and rigidity to the bundled tule form. The materials utilized for lashing in the photographs were 2-ply cattail cordage and split grape vines. Long willow withes and dogbane cordage were also used for tying tule boats together.













