



## Plant Profile: Butterbur (Fuki)

By: Alex Luken & Sarah Schaffner



Butterbur bloom

*Petasites japonicus 'variegatus'*

Family: Asteraceae

Location: Island planting along the main road in between sections 7, 8 and 9, 10

A planting on the Cave Hill Cemetery grounds that is most frequently asked about is found in an island planting along the main road between Sections 7, 8 and 9, 10. Known as Butterbur or the Asian name "Fuki", *Petasites japonicus 'variegatus'* makes an impressive showing because of its size and vigor.

Various species of *Petasites* are found throughout China, Japan, and Korea. Common Butterbur, *Petasites hybridus*, is native to Europe.

Butterbur thrives in shady, wet areas, and doesn't like to be in the sun, with the exception of *P. japonicus 'variegatus'*, which requires a light sunlight to bring out the variegated coloring in the leaves. Butterbur grows from rhizomes and will spread throughout its planting area under the right conditions. It is most often planted in containers buried in the ground to act as a root barrier to prevent the plant from becoming invasive. *P. japonicus* can reach a height of 3' with a spread of 5'. Its leaves may have a diameter up to 13" across, making it an arresting addition to a shady area. A member of the daisy family, Butterbur sends up a bright green alien-looking flower in the early spring, followed by variegated leaves whose variegation transforms from yellow to white as the summer progresses. *P. japonicus* is suitable for gardens in zones 5 – 9, and does well in wet, boggy locations. It is propagated by division of the rhizomes.



Section 7 Reserve

The plant is consumable by humans. In Asian countries, stems of the plant are prepared as a relish and eaten with a variety of dishes. Extract from *Petasites* is used as an herbal treatment for the prevention of migraines and to treat allergy symptoms.

Cultivars of *Petasites japonicus* include:

*Purple-leaved Butterbur Petasites japonicus 'Purpureus'* – deep purple leaves round in shape, resembling water lily leaf.

*Giant Japanese Butterbur Petasites japonicus 'var. giganteus'* – Plant grows to 4' in height, solid rich green leaves with silver underside, full sun to partial shade.

<http://www.louisetheplantgeek.com/4-a-gardening-journal/640-petasites-japonicus-variegatus>

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=a645>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/groundcover/japanese-butterbur/japanese-butterbur-plants.htm>