

Plant Imagination

Petasites japonicus

Easily grown in consistently moist to wet soils in part shade to full shade. If grown in full sun, leaves will typically wilt during hot days in somewhat the same manner as with the ligularias. Best grown at the shoreline of large natural ponds, on the banks of streams or in bogs. Tolerates a wide range of soils as long as consistent moisture is present. Large containers sunk in the mud may be used if control of rhizomatous spread is desired. Grow in containers for water gardens or smaller ponds.

Garden Uses

Banks of ponds, streams or water gardens. Bogs. Shady corner of the border or woodland garden as long as the soil moisture requirements can be met.

Noteworthy Characteristics

Petasites japonicus, commonly known as butterbur, fuki or sweet coltsfoot, is a rhizomatous perennial that is noted for its huge basal leaves that form dense spreading clumps of foliage to 3' tall and 5' wide. It is native to Korea, China and Japan where it is typically found growing on wet streambanks in woodland areas. Long-stalked, lightly toothed, kidney-shaped, green leaves (to 16-32" wide) are tomentose beneath. Fragrant, yellowish-white, daisy-like flowers in dense corymbs appear in spring before the leaves emerge on rigid scapes to 6" tall. Scapes elongate after bloom. Leaf stalks (petioles) are eaten as a vegetable (fuki) in Japan.



Image 1 Petasites japonicus or, Butterbur

Common Name: Butterbur

Type: Herbaceous Perennial

Family: Asteraceae

Native Range: Korea, China, Japan

Zone: 5 to 9

Height: 2.00 to 3.00 feet

Spread: 2.00 to 5.00 feet

Bloom Time: April

Flower: Showy, Fragrant

Bloom Description: Yellowish-white

Sun: Part shade to full shade

Water: Medium to wet

Maintenance: Medium

Tolerate: Heavy Shade, Erosion, Wet Soil



Genus name comes from the Greek petasos meaning a hat with a broad brim with reference to the large leaves.

Specific epithet means of Japan

The leaves were reportedly once used to wrap butter in hot weather, hence the common name.

No serious insect or disease problems.
Watch for slugs. Spreads aggressively by rhizomes if not grown in containers or otherwise restrained by barriers.

