

Japanese Butterbur / Fuki

Invasive Species Alert Sheet

Capital Region Invasive Species Program

The spread of non-native invasive plants has serious ecological, economic and health impacts. Local governments and other partners are asking for help from all residents to report and monitor **Japanese Butterbur** (*Petasites japonicus*) outbreaks on private property and public lands. Homeowners can manage this plant themselves or reach out to professionals for support. Butterbur is native to China, Korea and Japan, where it is known as **Fuki** 菜蓿.

Butterbur can cause harm to local ecosystems by monopolizing nutrients and quickly invades areas, causing erosion. Once established, the plant is challenging to eradicate as the removal process is time-consuming and labor-intensive. Although not yet widespread in the capital region, it is important to develop awareness and management practices to ensure it does not spread. **Caution:** this plant can be toxic to eat.

Why is Japanese Butterbur a problem?

- **Displaces native vegetation** by spreading rapidly and aggressively through rhizomes and rhizome fragments.
- **Threatens species at risk** by dominating habitats. **Shades out areas**, out-competes native vegetation, leaving bare ground susceptible to erosion.
- **Can contaminate plant nursery stock** and be accidentally introduced.
- **Can be toxic to ingest.**

Japanese Butterbur flower shoot. Right: Butterbur leaves.



What does it look like?

- **This plant resembles rhubarb.**
- **Flowers:** White to light yellow, cone-shaped on a spike and emerge before leaves in late winter/early spring.
- **Stems:** Hollow, ridged, can grow up to 1-2 m tall.
- **Leaves:** One single, very large tropical-looking leaf grows per stem, leaves are kidney-shaped and rough and can grow up to 1.5 m across, fuzzy on the underside.
- **Seeds:** Spreads mainly through rhizomes. Seeds 5-10 ribbed, with white bristles.
- **Roots:** Thick, sturdy pencil-sized rhizomes.





Japanese Butterbur (fuki), sprout



Japanese Butterbur (fuki) patch

Can be confused with?

INVASIVE *Abutilon*

theophrasti (velvetleaf): Heart-shaped leaves that are soft and velvety to touch, flowers are orange-yellow and produced on short stalks, is typically 2-4 feet tall.

INVASIVE *Gunnera manicata*

(giant rhubarb): Large round to kidney-shaped, deep green leaves, can grow up to 6 ft. across and spiny stalks can grow up to 10 ft. tall.

Habitat and biology

- A perennial in the Asteraceae (sunflower) family.
- Grows in consistently moist soil, typically around streams and ponds, in shady areas.
- Produces blooms in late winter (March-early April) before foliage appears.
- Produces a network of fast running rhizomes that spread in all directions from the original plant.
- Resilient and persistent, it will begin to colonize an extensive area after 1-2 years of establishment.

Proper disposal

- **Do not compost!** Rhizome material can spread allowing the species to persist.
- **Put all plant material in garbage bags** and dispose. The best option is to take the bags labelled "invasive species" to the Hartland Landfill.

What should you do if you spot a Butterbur plant?

- **Prevent:** don't buy, grow or trade this plant
- **Report:** report all outbreaks to the contacts below for support and monitoring.
- **Remove:** if you have an outbreak on your property, follow the instructions below for careful removal and follow up. Work to prevent and limit further spread.
- **Prevent spread:** clean shoes, tools, clothing, vehicles, pets and equipment before leaving an infested site. Use clean landscaping supplies- buy local!
- **Monitor:** monitor for outbreaks, especially during bloom time (March to April)

For small infestations

- **Manually remove:** hand pulling is not recommended as any remaining root fragments can regrow. Digging is best to remove this plant when soil is moist. Ensure to dig up and safely dispose of all rhizome material.
- **Monitor:** monitor the area for at least a few years.
- **Replant:** after removal, choose non-invasive or native species to replant.

Large infestations

- **Larger patches can be labour-intensive** and time consuming to remove. Tools such as large shovels, soil knives and mattocks can be helpful.
- **Herbicides appear to be ineffective on this species.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

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We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Forests.

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Revised Mar 2025