

# Butterbur

(*Petasites hybridus*)



## Key ID Features

**Arrangement:** basal

**Leaves:** large and round (16-28 inch diameter)

**Flowers:** pink/purple and grow on a spike that emerges in the spring before the leaves appear

**Fruit:** seeds in a white tuft

**Stem:** hollow with single leaf

**Root:** rhizome

**Growth Habit:** herbaceous perennial



## The Impact

Butterbur (also called “Sweet Coltsfoot”) was originally grown as a medicinal herb but escaped cultivation. It spreads aggressively along roadsides and into meadows. Valued for its edible stem in Japan where it is called “Fuki”, Butterbur can be found advertised in garden catalogs despite its invasive growing behavior.

Flowers are produced in the early spring before the leaves appear. Leaves are huge and round, resembling rhubarb but are more heart shaped and grow up to 3 feet in diameter. The leaves shade out native plants, leaving bare soil beneath which can contribute to erosion problems. Butterbur roots go deep, and it spreads by its rhizomes and rhizome fragments.

## Quick Facts

**Plant Family:** Asteraceae

**Origin:** Europe and Northern Asia

**Habitat:** disturbed areas, seeps, swamps, river banks and lake shores, meadows and fields, commonly found along roadsides

**Present in Vermont?:** yes

**Methods of Spread:** rhizomes

**Status:** watchlist\* species

<http://bit.ly/VTWatchlist>

\*The watchlist has no regulatory force but is used to educate the public about potentially problematic plants

**REPORT IT!** This is an Early Detection Species. Please report any sightings at: [vtinvasives.org/get-involved/report-it](http://vtinvasives.org/get-involved/report-it)

## Native Plant Alternatives



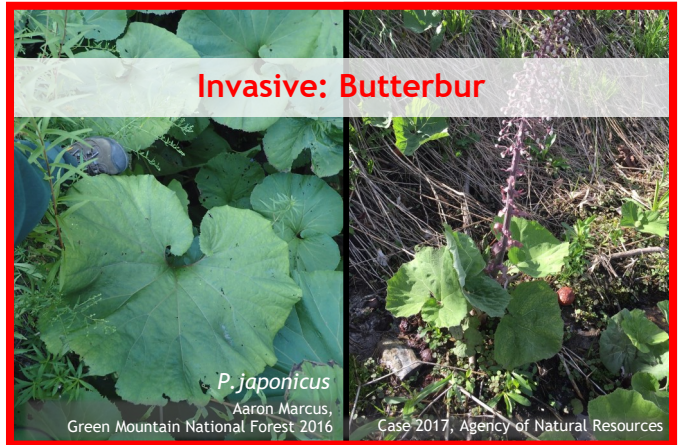
Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org

**Wild Ginger**  
(*Asarum canadense*):  
pollinated by beetles,  
grows in rich  
woodlands, aromatic  
root



James H. Miller & Ted Bodner,  
Southern Weed Science Society,  
Bugwood.org

**Wild Strawberry**  
(*Fragaria virginiana*):  
grows in a variety of  
soils, edible berries



**Invasive: Butterbur**

*P. japonicus*

Aaron Marcus,  
Green Mountain National Forest 2016

Case 2017, Agency of Natural Resources

## Common Look-alikes:



**Common Burdock**

Robert Vidéki/Doronicum Kft. Bugwood.org



**Wild Ginger**

Karan A. Rawlins University of Georgia Bugwood.org

### Distinguishing features

**Leaf:** elongated shape, tall when it bolts

### Distinguishing features

**Size:** much smaller, up to 8 inches across

## Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on **VTinvasives.org** and these additional resources:

<https://www.misin.msu.edu/facts/detail/project=misin&id=222&cname=Butterbur>

References: [Native Plant Trust: GoBotany - Butterbur](#), [Michigan Invasive Species - Butterbur](#)

This publication was created in 2019 by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and other VTInvasives.org partners.

