

Butterbur

Petasites hybridus

Plants · In flower Mar–May · huge leaves after



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A riverside perennial that does everything in the wrong order: thick pinkish flower spikes push up through bare ground in early spring, and only afterwards do the leaves appear — enormous rhubarb-like rounded leaves up to a metre across. Butterbur forms extensive colonies along the Nith and other riverbanks and damp meadows around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

The name comes from the old use of those huge leaves to wrap butter in hot weather. The early flowers are an important nectar source for the first bumblebees and hoverflies of the year. Male and female flowers grow on separate plants, and in Britain male plants dominate overwhelmingly, so most colonies spread by rhizome rather than seed.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Daisies (Asteraceae)
HEIGHT	Flower spikes 10–40 cm; leaves to 1 m across
STATUS	Native; common on riverbanks and damp ground

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