

## Arundo donax - Growing Guide

### Growing Arundo Donax

#### Giant reed

As you approach the car park at Burncoose Nurseries you cannot fail to see a tall (8-10ft) mature clump of *A. donax* var. *versicolor* (syn. 'Variegata') growing on top of a Cornish stone faced earth bank. Its canes look like they are those of a bamboo despite its white striped leaves. This is in fact a perennial reed or grass from southern Europe where it grows best in boggy ditches rather than on top of a hot dry wall as with us.

Although this is an evergreen plant it becomes scruffy by the end of the winter and the canes should probably be cut back to ground level in early spring so that they can reshoot afresh. Flowering takes place in mid to late autumn when 2ft long panicles of light green to purple spikelets appear at the tops of the canes. Cutting down the canes in winter encourages younger plants to flower more quickly as the first young canes on a newish plant will seldom produce flower panicles.

*A. donax* grows even taller than *A. donax* var. *versicolor* and can grow to up to 15ft in height in a spreading clump. The canes are strong and rigid enough to stand on their own without supports. Huge tall growing plants like this can make an interesting screen or backdrop to a shrub border or in a ditch at the end of a wild garden. They are however invasive and the rhizomes will need to be chopped off, dug and removed to keep the plant under control.



*A. donax* var. *versicolor*



*A. donax* var. *versicolor*



*A. donax* var. *versicolor* &  
*Tetropanax papyrifera*  
'Rex'



*A. donax* var. *versicolor* &  
*Tetropanax papyrifera*  
'Rex'

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