

At one time ferns were a dominant part of the earth's vegetation. They tend to be distributed in wetter parts of the world, but it is not uncommon to find them in very dry or very cold conditions. The majority of ferns inhabit wet, tropical forests and can be found from sea level to mountains over 15,000 feet in altitude. There are over 250 different genera of ferns and about 12,000 species!

In ferns, a leaf is referred to as a frond and a leaflet is a pinna. New fronds typically expand by unrolling out of a tight spiral called a fiddlehead. Ferns differ from most other plants in that they do not produce flowers or seeds. Instead they reproduce from spores. These spores are usually produced on the underside or edges of the frond; in some cases they are produced on separate, center stalks.

Some ferns are used for food, such as the fiddleheads of Ostrich Ferns and Cinnamon Ferns. The Mosquito Fern and some other ferns in the Azolla genus are very small floating plants that do not look like ferns at all. They are used as a biological fertilizer in the rice paddies of southeast Asia. Ferns are sometimes used in medicine to treat cuts. Ferns are also good bandages if you are stuck out in the wild. Rubbing a Sword Fern frond spore-side-down on a stinging nettle wound removes the stinging. Some ferns have been found to be useful in the removal of heavy metals, especially arsenic, from the soil. Most ferns, however, are grown as landscape plants and houseplants. On our list, GPP indicates a Great Plant Pick, chosen as an exceptionally good performer in the Puget Sound region.

### Fern frond shapes:



crenate serrate lacerate pinnate pinnatifid



bipinnate pinnate- tripinnate lance- triangular oblong  
pinnatifid shaped



roots

EVERGREEN FERNS				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Himalayan Maidenhair (GPP)</b> ( <i>Adiantum venustum</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Moderate; dislikes waterlogged soils	6" x 12"	Easy
<b>East Indian Holly Fern</b> ( <i>Arachniodes simplicior</i> 'Variegata')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	18" x 18"	Moderate
<b>Dragon Tail Fern</b> ( <i>Asplenium ebenoides</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	12" x 12"	Moderate
<b>Hart's Tongue Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18"-28" x 24"	Moderate
<b>Narrow Hart's Tongue Fern</b> ( <i>A. scolopendrium</i> 'Angustifolia')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	10" x 15"	Moderate
<b>Crested Hart's Tongue Fern</b> ( <i>A. scolopendrium</i> 'Cristata')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18" x 18"	Easy
<b>Wavyleaf Hart's Tongue Fern</b> ( <i>A. scolopendrium</i> 'Undulatum')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12" x 12"	Easy
<b>Maidenhair Spleenwort</b> ( <i>Asplenium trichomanes</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	6" x 8"	Moderate
<b>Alpine Water Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Blechnum penna-marina</i> )	Light Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	4-8" x indefinite	Easy
<b>Deer Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Blechnum spicant</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	8"-20" x 24"	Easy; native
<b>Japanese Holly Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Cyrtomium falcatum</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18" x 24"	Easy
<b>Hardy Holly Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Cyrtomium fortunei</i> )	Full Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24" x 16"	Easy
<b>Arching Holly Fern</b> ( <i>C. fortunei</i> 'Clivicola')	Full Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12-24", arching	Easy
<b>Hardy Holly Fern</b> ( <i>C. fortunei</i> var. <i>intermedium</i> )	Full Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-24"	Easy
<b>Broad Buckler Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris austriaca</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-36" x 18-24"	Easy
<b>Crested Broad Buckler Fern</b> ( <i>D. austriaca</i> 'Crispa Whiteside')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-48" x 18-36"	Easy
<b>Champion's Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris championii</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-36" x 24-36"	Easy
<b>Shaggy Shield Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Dryopteris cycadina</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Somewhat Dry to Moist	24-36" x 24-36"	Easy
<b>Koidzumi's Autumn Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris koidzumiana</i> )	Light Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	12-24"	Easy
<b>Marginal Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris marginalis</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	12" – 18"	Easy

EVERGREEN FERNS CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Beautiful Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris pulcherrima</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-36" x 36"	Easy
<b>Remote Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris remota</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Moist	24-36" x 24"	Easy
<b>Wallich's Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris wallichiana</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36-60"	Easy
<b>Licorice Fern</b> ( <i>Polypodium glycyrrhiza</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12-24"	Easy; native
<b>Leatherleaf Fern</b> ( <i>Polypodium scolopendri</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12-36"	Easy; native
<b>Common Polypody Fern</b> ( <i>Polypodium vulgare</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	8-12" x 12"	Easy
<b>Christmas Fern</b> ( <i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18-24" x 18-24"	Easy
<b>Hard Shield Fern</b> ( <i>Polystichum aculeatum</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	24" x 24"	Easy
<b>Braun's Holly Fern</b> ( <i>Polystichum braunii</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	18" – 30"	Easy
<b>Makinoi's Holly Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Polystichum makinoi</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	18-24" x 24"	Easy
<b>Western Sword Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Polystichum munitum</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist to Bog	3-5' x 4'	Easy; native
<b>Asian Saber Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Polystichum neolobatum</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Dry Tolerant to Evenly Moist	24" x 24"	Easy
<b>Tassel Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Polystichum polyblepharum</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Very Moist to Bog	24"-32" x 36"	Easy
<b>Prickly Holly Fern</b> ( <i>Polystichum rigens</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-16" x 16"	Easy
<b>Soft Shield Fern</b> ( <i>Polystichum setiferum</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist to Bog	24-36" x 36"	Easy
<b>Bevis Soft Shield Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Polystichum setiferum</i> 'Bevis')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	24-36"	Easy
<b>Divided Soft Shield Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>P. setiferum</i> 'Divisilobum')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	18" x 24"	Easy
<b>Mossy Soft Shield Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>P. setiferum</i> 'Plumosum Densum')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	18-24" x 36"	Moderate
<b>Mother Soft Shield Fern</b> ( <i>P. setiferum</i> 'Proliferum')	Part Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	24-36"	Easy
<b>Wollaston's Shield Fern (P. setiferum</b> 'Proliferum Wollastonii')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Slightly Dry to Very Moist	24" x 18"	Easy

EVERGREEN FERNS CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Korean Rock Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Polystichum tsus-simense</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Moderately Moist	12-18"	Easy to moderate
<b>Dyce's Holly Fern</b> ( <i>Polystichum x dycei</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Moderately Moist	36" x 48"	Moderate
<b>Silver Saber Fern</b> ( <i>Polystichum xiphophyllum</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-18" x 18"	Easy
<b>Ribbon (Brake) Fern</b> ( <i>Pteris cretica</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-24" x 12-24"	<b>Zone 8</b>
<b>Tongue Fern</b> ( <i>Pyrrosia lingua</i> )	Light Shade to Part Sun	Moderately Moist	12-18"	Easy
<b>Leatherleaf Fern</b> ( <i>Rumohra adiantiformis 'Variegata'</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36" x 60"	<b>Zone 8</b>
<b>Oriental Chain Fern</b> ( <i>Woodwardia orientalis</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24" x 48-60"	Moderate; <b>Zone 8</b>
<b>Jeweled Chain Fern</b> ( <i>Woodwardia unigemmata</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36-72" X 60"	Moderate; <b>Zone 8</b>
SEMI- EVERGREEN FERNS				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Upside-Down Fern</b> ( <i>Arachnoides standishii</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-36"	Moderate
<b>Eared Lady Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Athyrium otophorum</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	18"-24" x 15"-18"	Easy
<b>Rochford's Holly Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Cyrtomium falcatum 'Rochfordianum'</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	18" x 24"	Easy
<b>Common Rasp Fern</b> ( <i>Doodia media</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly moist until established	12-14"	Easy
<b>Golden-scaled Male Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris affinis</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	36" x 36"	Easy
<b>Dwarf Golden Male Fern</b> ( <i>D. affinis 'Crispa Congesta'</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	10-12" x 12"	Moderate
<b>Dwarf Golden Male Fern</b> ( <i>D. affinis 'Crispa Gracillis'</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	12" x 12"	Easy
<b>Pinder's Golden-scaled Male Fern</b> ( <i>D. affinis 'Pinderi'</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	12-24"	Easy
<b>Dixie Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris australis</i> )	Full Shade to Part Shade	Evenly Moist	48-60" x 36"	Easy
<b>Robust Male Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris complexa 'Robust'</i> )	Full Shade to Part Shade	Dry Tolerant to Evenly Moist	36-60"	Easy

SEMI- EVERGREEN FERNS CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Autumn Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Dryopteris erythrosora</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36"	Easy
<b>Brilliance Autumn Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>D. erythrosora</i> 'Brilliance')	Full Shade to Light Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36"	Easy
<b>Copper Shield Fern</b> ( <i>D. erythrosora</i> 'Prolifica')	Part Shade to Light Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36"	Easy
<b>Male Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	3-4' x 3-4'	Easy
<b>Barnes' Male Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> 'Barnesii')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	4' x 4'	Easy
<b>Curled Crested Male Fern</b> ( <i>D. filix-mas</i> 'Crisp Cristata')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	2'-5' x 2'-5'	Easy
<b>Crested Male Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> 'Cristata')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	2'-5' x 2'-5'	Easy
<b>Crested Jackson Male Fern</b> ( <i>D. filix-mas</i> 'Cristata Jackson')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24"	Easy
<b>Parsley Male Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> 'Parsley')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Moist	18-14"	Easy
<b>Sunset Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Dryopteris lepidopoda</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24"	Easy
<b>Siebold's Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris sieboldii</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Dry Tolerant to Moist	18-30"	Easy
<b>Tokyo Wood Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris tokyoensis</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-36" x 24"	Easy
<b>Jurassic Gold Wood Fern</b> ( <i>D. wallichiana</i> 'Jurassic Gold')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18-24"	Easy
<b>Congested Soft Shield Fern</b> ( <i>P. setiferum</i> 'Congestum')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	6-12"	Easy
<b>Herrenhausen Shield Fern</b> ( <i>P. setiferum</i> 'Herrenhausen')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36" x 24"	Easy
<b>Giant Chain Fern</b> ( <i>Woodwardia fimbriata</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	48-72"	<b>Zone 8</b>
DECIDUOUS FERNS				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Western Maidenhair (GPP)</b> ( <i>Adiantum aleuticum</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	30" x 30"	Moderate
<b>Mairis's Maidenhair (GPP)</b> ( <i>Adiantum x mairisii</i> )	Light Shade	Regular Water	12-15" x 12-24"	Easy
<b>Northern Maidenhair</b> ( <i>Adiantum pedatum</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-30" x 12-30"	Moderate

DECIDUOUS FERNS, CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Lady Fern</b> ( <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Dry Tolerant to Bog	48" x 24"-36"	Easy; native
<b>Tatting Fern</b> ( <i>A. filix-femina</i> 'Frizelliae')	Full to Light Shade	Dry Tolerant to Bog	8" x 12"	Easy
<b>Lady in Red Fern</b> ( <i>A. filix-femina</i> 'Lady in Red')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36" x 36"	Easy
<b>Japanese Lady Fern</b> ( <i>Athyrium niponicum</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	8"-12" x indefinite	Moderate
<b>Godzilla Japanese Fern</b> ( <i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Godzilla')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36" x 48-72"	Moderate
<b>Metallicum Japanese Fern</b> ( <i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Metallicum')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-18" x 12-18"	Moderate
<b>Japanese Painted Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Pictum')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-15" x 12-15"	Moderate
<b>Red Beauty Japanese Fern</b> ( <i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Red Beauty')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12" x 20"	Moderate
<b>Regal Red Japanese Fern</b> ( <i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Regal Red')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-18" x 18-24"	Moderate
<b>Silver Falls Japanese Fern</b> ( <i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Silver Falls')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-18" x 12-18"	Moderate
<b>Branford Beauty Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Athyrium</i> x ' <i>Branford Beauty</i> ')	Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24" x 24"	Easy
<b>Ghost Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Athyrium</i> x ' <i>Ghost</i> ')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24" x 24"	Moderate
<b>Broad Buckler Fern</b> ( <i>Dryopteris dilatata</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	3' x 4'	Easy
<b>Oak Fern</b> ( <i>Gymnocarpium dryopteris</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	9-12"	Easy
<b>Ostrich Fern</b> ( <i>Matteucia struthiopteris</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	60" x 36"	Easy
<b>Sensitive Fern</b> ( <i>Onoclea sensibilis</i> )	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24" x indefinite	Easy
<b>Cinnamon Fern</b> ( <i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	36-60" x 24"	Easy
<b>Royal Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>Osmunda regalis</i> )	Light Shade to Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	5' x 6'	Easy
<b>Crested Royal Fern (GPP)</b> ( <i>O. regalis</i> var <i>purpurascens</i> )	Light Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	4' x 4'	Easy
<b>Japanese Beech Fern</b> ( <i>Thelypteris decursive-pinnata</i> )	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	24" x 18"	Moderate

INDOOR FERNS				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
<b>Maidenhair Fern</b> ( <i>Adiantum</i> sp.)	Low to Medium	Evenly Moist	12"	Difficult
<b>Foxtail Fern (not a true fern)</b> ( <i>Asparagus densiflorus</i> 'Meyers')	Bright	Moderately Moist	18" – 24"	Medium
<b>Sprenger Fern (not a true fern)</b> ( <i>Asparagus densiflorus</i> 'Sprengeri')	Bright	Moderately Moist	3' – 6'	Medium
<b>Asparagus Fern (not a true fern)</b> ( <i>Asparagus plumosus</i> )	Bright	Moderately Moist	10' - 20' vine	Medium
<b>Bird's Nest Fern</b> ( <i>Asplenium antiquum</i> OR <i>A. nidus</i> )	Low to Medium	Moderately Moist	4'	Medium
<b>Mother Fern</b> ( <i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i> )	Low to Medium	Moderately Moist	4'	Medium
<b>Rabbit's Foot Fern</b> ( <i>Davallia fejeensis</i> )	Medium	Moderately Moist	12"	Medium
<b>Crocodile Fern</b> ( <i>Microsorium musifolium</i> 'Crocodyllus')	Medium	Moderately Moist	12"	Medium
<b>Kangaroo Fern</b> ( <i>Microsorium pustulatum</i> )	Medium	Moderately Moist	12"	Medium
<b>Boston Fern</b> ( <i>Nephrolepis exaltata</i> 'Bostoniensis')	Low to Medium	Moist	2' – 3'	Medium
<b>Blue Bell Boston Fern</b> ( <i>N. exaltata</i> 'Bostoniensis Blue Bell')	Low to Medium	Moist	2' – 3'	Medium
<b>Emina Fern</b> ( <i>Nephrolepis exaltata</i> 'Emina')	Low to Medium	Moist	18"	Medium
<b>Macho Fern</b> ( <i>Nephrolepis falcate</i> )	Low to Medium	Moist	4'	Medium
<b>Lemon Button Fern</b> ( <i>Nephrolepis cordifolia</i> 'Duffii')	Low to Medium	Moist	12"	Medium
<b>Fishtail Fern</b> ( <i>Nephrolepis falcata</i> 'Furcans')	Low to Medium	Moist	36"	Medium
<b>Button Fern</b> ( <i>Pellaea rotundifolia</i> )	Low	Moderately Moist	10"- 12"	Medium
<b>Staghorn Fern</b> ( <i>Platycterium</i> sp.)	Low to Medium	Moderately Dry	varies with species	Difficult
<b>Brake Fern</b> ( <i>Pteris</i> sp.)	Low to Medium	Moderately Dry	24"	Easy

Australian Tree Ferns and Tasmanian Tree Ferns are great tropical ferns. However, they both grow very large and are better suited for a greenhouse or conservatory than as a houseplant.