

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 you can find them even 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!

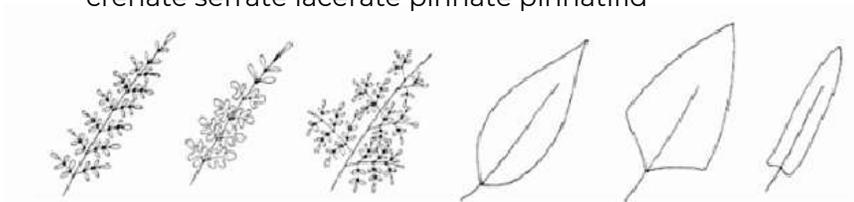
In ferns, a leaf is referred to as a frond and a leaflet is a pinna. New fronds typically expand by unrolling out of a tight spiral called a fiddlehead. Ferns differ from most other plants in that they do not produce flowers or seeds. Instead they reproduce from spores. These spores are usually produced 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
Himalayan Maidenhair (GPP) (<i>Adiantum venustum</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Moderate; dislikes waterlogged soils	6" x 12"	Easy
East Indian Holly Fern (<i>Arachniodes simplicior</i> 'Variegata')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	18" x 18"	Moderate
Dragon Tail Fern (<i>Asplenium ebenoides</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	12" x 12"	Moderate
Hart's Tongue Fern (GPP) (<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18"-28" x 24"	Moderate
Narrow Hart's Tongue Fern (<i>A. scolopendrium</i> 'Angustifolia')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	10" x 15"	Moderate
Crested Hart's Tongue Fern (GPP) (<i>A. scolopendrium</i> 'Cristata')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18" x 18"	Easy
Split Crest Hart's Tongue Fern (<i>A. scolopendrium</i> 'Furcata')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	16" x 24"	Easy
Wavyleaf Hart's Tongue Fern (<i>A. scolopendrium</i> 'Undulatum')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12" x 12"	Easy
Maidenhair Spleenwort (GPP) (<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	6" x 8"	Moderate
Alpine Water Fern (GPP) (<i>Blechnum penna-marina</i>)	Light Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	4-8" x indefinite	Easy
Deer Fern (GPP) (<i>Blechnum spicant</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	8"-20" x 24"	Easy; native
Mulga Fern (<i>Cheilanthes sieberi</i>)	Full Sun to Part Sun	Tolerates Drought	10" x 10"	Moderate
Japanese Holly Fern (GPP) (<i>Cyrtomium falcatum</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18" x 24"	Easy
Hardy Holly Fern (GPP) (<i>Cyrtomium fortunei</i>)	Full Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24" x 16"	Easy
Arching Holly Fern (<i>C. fortunei</i> 'Clivicola')	Full Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12-24", arching	Easy
Hardy Holly Fern (<i>C. fortunei</i> var. <i>intermedium</i>)	Full Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-24"	Easy
Broad Buckler Fern (<i>Dryopteris austriaca</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-36" x 18-24"	Easy
Crested Broad Buckler Fern (<i>D. austriaca</i> 'Crispa Whiteside')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-48" x 18-36"	Easy
Champion's Wood Fern (GPP) (<i>Dryopteris championii</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-36" x 24-36"	Easy
Shaggy Shield Fern (GPP) (<i>Dryopteris cycadina</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Somewhat Dry to Moist	24-36" x 24-36"	Easy

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

EVERGREEN FERNS CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
Mossy Soft Shield Fern (GPP) (<i>Polystichum setiferum</i> 'Plumosum Densum')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	18-24" x 36"	Moderate
Mother Soft Shield Fern (<i>P. setiferum</i> 'Proliferum')	Part Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	24-36"	Easy
Wollaston's Shield Fern (<i>P. setiferum</i> 'Proliferum Wollastonii')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Slightly Dry to Very Moist	24" x 18"	Easy
Korean Rock Fern (GPP) (<i>Polystichum tsus-simense</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Moderately Moist	12-18"	Easy to moderate
Dyce's Holly Fern (GPP) (<i>Polystichum x dycei</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Moderately Moist	36" x 48"	Moderate
Silver Saber Fern (<i>Polystichum xiphophyllum</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-18" x 18"	Easy
Ribbon (Brake) Fern (<i>Pteris cretica</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-24" x 12-24"	Zone 8
Tongue Fern (<i>Pyrrosia lingua</i>)	Light Shade to Part Sun	Moderately Moist	12-18"	Easy
Leatherleaf Fern (<i>Rumohra adiantiformis</i> 'Variegata')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36" x 60"	Zone 8
Giant Chain Fern (<i>Woodwardia fimbriata</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	48-72"	Zone 8
Oriental Chain Fern (<i>Woodwardia orientalis</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24" x 48-60"	Moderate; Zone 8
Jeweled Chain Fern (<i>Woodwardia unigemmata</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36-72" X 60"	Moderate; Zone 8
SEMI- EVERGREEN FERNS				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
Upside-Down Fern (GPP) (<i>Arachnoides standishii</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24-36"	Moderate
Eared Lady Fern (GPP) (<i>Athyrium otophorum</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	18"-24" x 15"-18"	Easy
Rochford's Holly Fern (GPP) (<i>Cyrtomium falcatum</i> 'Rochfordianum')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	18" x 24"	Easy
Common Rasp Fern (<i>Doodia media</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly moist until established	12-14"	Easy
Golden-scaled Male Fern (<i>Dryopteris affinis</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	36" x 36"	Easy

SEMI- EVERGREEN FERNS CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
Dwarf Golden Male Fern (<i>Dryopteris affinis</i> 'Crispa Congesta')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	10-12" x 12"	Moderate
Dwarf Golden Male Fern (GPP) (<i>D. affinis</i> 'Crispa Gracillis')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	12" x 12"	Easy
Pinder's Golden-scaled Male Fern (<i>D. affinis</i> 'Pinderi')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	12-24"	Easy
Shaggy Wood Fern (<i>Dryopteris atrata</i>)	Full Shade to Part Shade	Evenly Moist	36" x 36"	Easy
Dixie Wood Fern (<i>Dryopteris australis</i>)	Full Shade to Part Shade	Evenly Moist	48-60" x 36"	Easy
Robust Male Fern (<i>Dryopteris complexa</i> 'Robust')	Full Shade to Part Shade	Dry Tolerant to Evenly Moist	36-60"	Easy
Autumn Fern (GPP) (<i>Dryopteris erythrosora</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36"	Easy
Brilliance Autumn Fern (GPP) (<i>Dryopteris erythrosora</i> 'Brilliance')	Full Shade to Light Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36"	Easy
Copper Shield Fern (<i>D. erythrosora</i> 'Prolifica')	Part Shade to Light Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36"	Easy
Male Fern (<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	3-4' x 3-4'	Easy
Barnes' Male Fern (<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> 'Barnesii')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	4' x 4'	Easy
Curled Crested Male Fern (<i>D. filix-mas</i> 'Crisp Cristata')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	2'-5' x 2'-5'	Easy
Crested Male Fern (<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> 'Cristata')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	2'-5' x 2'-5'	Easy
Crested Jackson Male Fern (<i>D. filix-mas</i> 'Cristata Jackson')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24"	Easy
Parsley Male Fern (<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> 'Parsley')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Moist	18-14"	Easy
Sunset Fern (GPP) (<i>Dryopteris lepidopoda</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24"	Easy
Siebold's Wood Fern (<i>Dryopteris sieboldii</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Dry Tolerant to Moist	18-30"	Easy
Tokyo Wood Fern (GPP) (<i>Dryopteris tokyoensis</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-36" x 24"	Easy
Wallich's Wood Fern (GPP) (<i>Dryopteris wallichiana</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36-48"	Easy
Jurassic Gold Wood Fern (<i>D. wallichiana</i> 'Jurassic Gold')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	18-24"	Easy

SEMI- EVERGREEN FERNS CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
Congested Soft Shield Fern (<i>Polystichum setiferum</i> 'Congestum')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	6-12"	Easy
Herrenhausen Shield Fern (<i>P. setiferum</i> 'Herrenhausen')	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36" x 24"	Easy
DECIDUOUS FERNS				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
Western Maidenhair (GPP) (<i>Adiantum aleuticum</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly Moist	30" x 30"	Moderate
Mairis's Maidenhair (GPP) (<i>Adiantum x mairisii</i>)	Light Shade	Regular Water	12-15" x 12-24"	Easy
Northern Maidenhair (<i>Adiantum pedatum</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	12-30" x 12-30"	Moderate
Lady Fern (<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Dry Tolerant to Bog	48" x 24"-36"	Easy; native
Tatting Fern (<i>A. filix-femina</i> 'Frizelliae')	Full to Light Shade	Dry Tolerant to Bog	8" x 12"	Easy
Lady in Red Fern (<i>A. filix-femina</i> 'Lady in Red')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	36" x 36"	Easy
Japanese Lady Fern (<i>Athyrium niponicum</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	8"-12" x indefinite	Moderate
Godzilla Japanese Fern (<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Godzilla')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24-36" x 48-72"	Moderate
Metallicum Japanese Fern (<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Metallicum')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-18" x 12-18"	Moderate
Pearly White Japanese Fern (<i>A. niponicum</i> 'Pearly White')	Full to Light Shade	Regular water to Evenly Moist	8"-18" x 18-24"	Easy
Japanese Painted Fern (GPP) (<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Pictum')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-15" x 12-15"	Moderate
Red Beauty Japanese Fern (<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Red Beauty')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12" x 20"	Moderate
Regal Red Japanese Fern (<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Regal Red')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-18" x 18-24"	Moderate
Silver Falls Japanese Fern (GPP) (<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Silver Falls')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	12"-18" x 12-18"	Moderate
Aubergine Lady Fern (<i>Athyrium x 'Aubergine Lady'</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Slightly to Evenly Moist	24" x 24"	Moderate

DECIDUOUS FERNS, CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
Brandford Beauty Fern (GPP) (<i>Athyrium</i> x ' <i>Brandford Beauty</i> ')	Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24" x 24"	Easy
Ghost Fern (GPP) (<i>Athyrium</i> x ' <i>Ghost</i> ')	Full to Light Shade	Evenly Moist	24" x 24"	Moderate
Broad Buckler Fern (<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Dry Tolerant to Very Moist	3' x 4'	Easy
Oak Fern (<i>Gymnocarpium dryopteris</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	9-12"	Easy
Ostrich Fern (<i>Matteucia struthiopteris</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	60" x 36"	Easy
Sensitive Fern (<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>)	Full to Light Shade	Evenly to Very Moist	24" x indefinite	Easy
Cinnamon Fern (<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i>)	Full Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	36-60" x 24"	Easy
Royal Fern (GPP) (<i>Osmunda regalis</i>)	Light Shade to Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	5' x 6'	Easy
Crested Royal Fern (GPP) (<i>O. regalis</i> var <i>purpurascens</i>)	Light Shade to Part Sun	Evenly to Very Moist	4' x 4'	Easy
Japanese Beech Fern (<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
Maidenhair Fern (<i>Adiantum</i> sp.)	Low to Medium	Evenly Moist	12"	Difficult
Foxtail Fern (not a true fern) (<i>Asparagus densiflorus</i> ' <i>Meyers</i> ')	Bright	Moderately Moist	18" – 24"	Medium
Sprenger Fern (not a true fern) (<i>Asparagus densiflorus</i> ' <i>Sprenger</i> ')	Bright	Moderately Moist	3' – 6'	Medium
Asparagus Fern (not a true fern) (<i>Asparagus plumosus</i>)	Bright	Moderately Moist	10' - 20' vine	Medium
Bird's Nest Fern (<i>Asplenium antiquum</i> OR <i>A. nidus</i>)	Low to Medium	Moderately Moist	4'	Medium
Mother Fern (<i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i>)	Low to Medium	Moderately Moist	4'	Medium
Rabbit's Foot Fern (<i>Davallia fejeensis</i>)	Medium	Moderately Moist	12"	Medium
Crocodile Fern (<i>Microsorium musifolium</i> ' <i>Crocodyllus</i> ')	Medium	Moderately Moist	12"	Medium

INDOOR FERNS, CONTINUED				
Plant	Light	Water	Size	Care
Kangaroo Fern (<i>Microsorium pustulatum</i>)	Medium	Moderately Moist	12"	Medium
Boston Fern (<i>Nephrolepis exaltata</i> 'Bostoniensis')	Low to Medium	Moist	2' – 3'	Medium
Blue Bell Boston Fern (<i>N. exaltata</i> 'Bostoniensis Blue Bell')	Low to Medium	Moist	2' – 3'	Medium
Emina Fern (<i>Nephrolepis exaltata</i> 'Emina')	Low to Medium	Moist	18"	Medium
Macho Fern (<i>Nephrolepis falcata</i>)	Low to Medium	Moist	4'	Medium
Lemon Button Fern (<i>Nephrolepis cordifolia</i> 'Duffii')	Low to Medium	Moist	12"	Medium
Fishtail Fern (<i>Nephrolepis falcata</i> 'Furcans')	Low to Medium	Moist	36"	Medium
Button Fern (<i>Pellaea rotundifolia</i>)	Low	Moderately Moist	10"- 12"	Medium
Staghorn Fern (<i>Platycterium</i> sp.)	Low to Medium	Moderately Dry	varies with species	Difficult
Brake Fern (<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.