

FERNS

Delicately beautiful, many shades of bright green in colour, the fern family has a wide range of uses in decorating your home. They can be grown as pot plants indoors, in hanging baskets under your pergola or planted in a rainforest-like landscape to give an air of tropical romance to your outdoor entertaining areas. Most ferns come from tropical and sub-tropical climates.

They are most often seen as the bottom storey of growth in forests.

1. Watering - Ferns have very inefficient root systems compared to most other plants. Instead of being able to suck moisture out of the surrounding soil, the roots of ferns can only conduct the moisture up to the leafy growth by capillary action, which is much slower. Therefore, ferns need to be kept constantly moist. They should not dry out between waterings. However, they don't like to have "wet feet" and should not be left to sit in a saucer of water.

2. Humidity - Because of their tropical origin, they appreciate a fairly moist atmosphere. Watch out for heaters inside your home that dry the atmosphere severely. It's a good move to cluster ferns around a saucer of water.

Another method of increasing humidity is to spray your plants with a mister. Ferns planted in the garden will enjoy a mulch of compost Peat, cow manure or even woodchips. This will help to increase the humidity as well as hold moisture around the root systems.

3. Soils for Potting On - An ideal soil mix has a high humus content. Mix two parts of German peat Moss with one part gritty sand, or alternatively a mix of pulverised composted cow manure and a sprinkling of crushed chunky charcoal works very well. A light sprinkling of Waldecks All Purpose Plant Food will supply a gentle feed without burning.

4. Feeding - Fish Emulsion is the most successful fertiliser for the whole family of ferns. It is a slow release fertiliser supplying nutrients over a two month period. It is very safe to use on ferns.

5. Location - Ferns need shade. While they do well inside your home, it's a good idea to pop them out under a shaded pergola regularly for a bit of fresh air. Ferns dislike drying winds as well as drafts indoors.

6. Division - Some varieties such as Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum*), Boston Ferns (*Nephrolepis*) and Hairs Foot (*Davalia*) can be divided up to produce more plants. This is best done in spring. After you have divided your plants, they have gone through a certain amount of trauma and need extra protection from wind and drafts.

7. Pests - Scale, Mealy Bug and Aphis are the most common insect pests for ferns. It is advisable to inspect your plants regularly and quickly take action at the first sign of these troublesome insects. Mix up Malathion to half strength - it is safe to use on the majority of varieties. Avoid using oil based sprays, leaf gloss, on your plants. Be careful when spraying household aerosol insecticides. These often contain a kerosene based propellant which is very damaging to ferns.

8. Ferns are usually grown in pots, baskets or similar containers, however, they are a delightful subject for landscaping, particularly in association with palms. Rock gardens, waterfalls and pools are enhanced with an assortment of fern varieties. Fern gardens are becoming increasingly popular and make a wonderful welcoming entrance to your home. Mix and match your other indoor and outdoor plants. You will find they blend in beautifully and add a different foliage accent.

Waldecks offer a wide range of ferns, many are seasonal varieties and therefore not available throughout the year. We invite your enquiries.