

Ferns for Central Coast Gardens

Ferns can add a lush beauty to your garden or home. Dating back to the Carboniferous period, some 350 million years ago, ferns are one of the oldest plant forms.

On the Central Coast there are many beautiful ferns indigenous to this area.

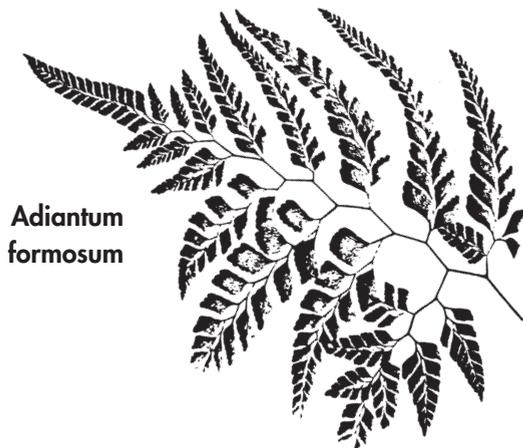
Why not try some of these ferns:

- in your garden,
- indoors,
- in a hanging basket,
- in or near a water feature.

What is a fern?

Ferns belong to a group of non-flowering plants that include algae, mosses and liverworts.

From large tree ferns such as Cyatheas, to the tiny delicate maidenhair fern Adiantums, ferns have one thing in common. They all produce spores.



**Adiantum
formosum**

What growing conditions do ferns like?

Most ferns prefer a cool, moist position in light dappled shade, protected from strong winds.

Generally ferns like a soil containing plenty of organic matter. Heavy mulching around the root area will keep the roots cool and prevent water loss. A free draining mix should be used for plants grown in pots or baskets. Ferns grown indoors should be kept away from direct sunlight, draughts and heaters.

Do ferns have any pests or diseases?

Generally ferns are not troubled by many pests or diseases. However, slugs and snails can sometimes be a problem, as can scale, insect pests and mealy bug. If your plants suffer from any of these problems, consult your local nursery, as treatment of these pests is constantly being improved and updated.

Where do ferns grow?

Ferns can be found growing as:

- epiphytes sometimes attached to a tree high up in the canopy. The tree is used for support and the fern is not parasitic on the host.
- terrestrials where the fern grows on the forest floor in rotting leaf litter.
- lithophytes with the fern growing on rocks.
- aquatics such as Azolla and those that are semi-aquatic such as Marsilea. These ferns have developed tiny scale-like fronds that enable them to float on the water

Knowing the origin of a fern will help you select the right fern for the right spot. Observe where the ferns grow naturally in the bush. Try and replicate this aspect in your garden.

How do I grow my epiphytes?

These ferns can be attached on:

- tree trunks in your garden,
- timber boards,
- logs
- hanging baskets.

Beware, do not attach an epiphyte to a tree that will lose its bark by wrapping wire or rope around the whole tree circumference, as this will kill the tree.

Some local ferns to grow in your garden-

Planted in the right spot in your garden, these local ferns will prove hardy.

- **Common Maidenhair Fern *Adiantum aethiopicum*** looks delicate but it is easy to grow. This fern will sucker profusely. It does not like full shade.
- **Giant Maidenhair *Adiantum formosum*** has an attractive, long black stem to 1m. tall and dark green lacy fronds. Vigorous growth from a long creeping rhizome.
- **Rough Maidenhair *Adiantum hispidulum*** has finger-like fronds with pink new growth.
- **Birds Nest Fern *Asplenium australasicum*** with erect fronds up to 2m. forming a rosette.
- **Gristle Fern *Blechnum cartilagineum*** forms a large clump up to 1.5m. high. Light green fronds with rosy pink new shoots.
- **Water Fern *Blechnum nudum*** forms a bright green rosette of fronds to 1m. Likes a moist position.
- **Rough Tree Fern *Cyathea australis*** is very hardy in almost any garden situation. Will grow in full sun if given plenty of water.
- **Scaly Tree Fern *Cyathea cooperi*** is fast growing. Trunk patterned with oval scars left by fallen fronds. Can be grown in full sun if the roots are kept moist.
- **Hare's Foot Fern *Davallia pyxidata*** a creeping fern which has dark green leaves up to 1m. long. The prominent hairy rhizome resembles a hare's foot and often runs above ground or over rocks.
- **Soft Tree Fern *Dicksonia antarctica*** a popular tree fern that develops a soft fibrous trunk. This fern needs plenty of water in hot weather.
- **Prickly Rasp Fern *Doodia aspera*** is very hardy, fronds to 50cm, with new growth an attractive reddish colour. Suckers into a large colony.
- **Fragrant Fern *Microsorium scandens*** a lovely scrambling fern that will climb over rocks or tree trunks.
- **Sickle Fern *Pellaea falcata*** has a creeping rhizome with shiny dark green fronds to 60cm.
- **Elkhorn Fern *Platycterium bifurcatum*** popular fern developing many small plants to form a large clump.
- **Mother Shield Fern *Polystichum proliferum*** grows easily in all but poorly drained soils, to 1m. Forms

plantlets near the end of fronds, peg down and allow to form roots before detaching from main plant.

- **Tender Brake *Pteris tremula*** is fast growing with erect fronds to 1m. Will not tolerate full shade.
- **Rock Felt Fern *Pyrrosia rupestris*** easily grown small fern found growing on rocks and tree trunks.
- **Austral King Fern *Todea barbara*** is a large fern with fronds up to 1.5m. and with age will develop a trunk. Slow growing.

Some suggested reference books-

Australian Fern and Fern Allies, D.L Jones & S.C Clemesha, Reed Books, Sydney.
Australian Ferns - Growing them Successfully, C.Chaffey, Kangaroo Press, Sydney.
Native Plants of the Sydney District, A.Fairley & P.Moore, Kangaroo Press, Sydney



Adiantum hispidulum

Produced by the Australian Plants Society, Central Coast Group in conjunction with the Central Coast Waste Board, Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council.

