

## Ferns: Lush and green (and practically pest-free)

If you would like a cool tropical hideaway corner, create a fern garden. Ferns are a care-free, perennial, shade plant. Their one requirement is moisture and they prefer shade, but will tolerate some sun. Just like any other garden, it will flourish if the requirements are met.

Ferns planted in a wooded area will do fine because this is their natural habitat. The leaf mold and mulch are already there. If the summer gets really hot and dry and there is no natural stream, extra watering will help because trees take up the moisture.

To create a fern area on a city lot requires a little more work. A natural setting is pool or fountain, but any shady spot that does not get the hot dry breeze from a city street will do.

Hot dry air makes ferns turn brown. An isolated spot to the back of the house, garage or a shrub-sheltered area are ideal for fern gardens.

The ground should be worked up by spading in lots of leaves, peat and rotted wood. A few bushels of fresh soil from the woods will also be a great help.

One thing to remember, however, is not to use any fertilizers or sprays on ferns because they are tender and have a natural built-in resistance to pests.

The area can be prepared a season before or planted right away. Either way, always keep the area moist.

Ferns are available at any local nursery or through the catalogues. Very often a friend will have extra plants. They are everywhere in the woods, but you may get an undesirable plant and that could create a problem later on.

A small garden should have non-spreading ferns and a large naturalized garden can take any spreading plants. The following list will help in selecting plants for your particular size of garden.

For a large garden with lots of space to fill purchase, the Ostrich Fern, Sensitive Fern, Bracken, Marsh Fern or Hayscented Fern.

For a small garden where you want individual settings of plants by a rock statue, or just a special setting purchase any of the following: Three Osmunda Ferns --Cinnamon, Interrupted, or Royal; Three Dryopteris (evergreen) Ferns --Crested Wood, Spentulose Wood or Marglional Wood; Maidenhair Fern; Christmas (evergreen) Fern. This last group of ferns will stay put for years and after they become established will be a thing of beauty.

Not mentioned are the Athyrium or Lady Fern because it can be a problem. In the early summer it is lovely, but later on becomes very shaggy. As the many spores mature on the backs of the fertile fronds, it turns dark brown and the leaves turn yellow. The other ferns do not go to this extreme and stay lovely. Also the

Lady Fern should be divided quite often because it is pretty only as an individual plant.

An interesting phase of ferns is the development of the spores. This development is often mistaken for disease or even insects.

All ferns grow a sterile and a fertile frond. These spores look like brown dust. The Ostrich and Sensitive Ferns are different. Their fertile fronds are a stout short spike. This spike remains upright long into the winter and is very often used in dried arrangements.

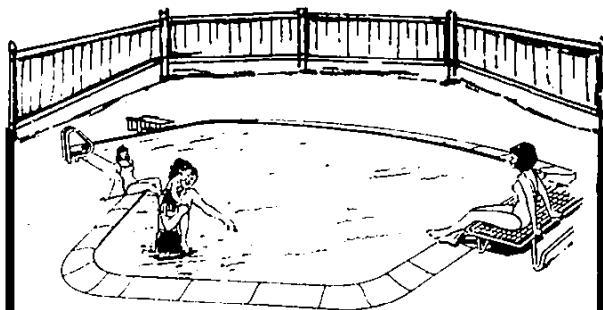
Each of the Osmunda Ferns is unique and has a spore-producing style all of their own. Once you observe all of these strange happenings to your ferns, you will learn to identify the different plants.

Wild flowers or shade-loving flowering perennials are good companion plants for a fern garden, but an all-green garden always looks so lush and cool.

—MARGARET CONVERSE

### Evaporates

An average-sized swimming pool (20'-by-40') evaporates between 25 and 50 gallons of water per week, as much as used in one shower lasting three to five minutes. A tub bath requires about 35 gallons.



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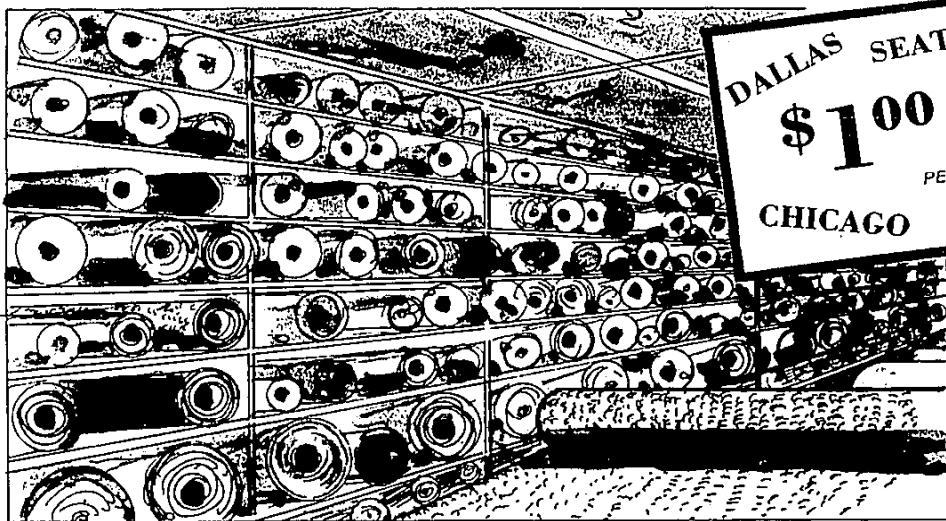
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