

TROPICAL FERNS

Ferns and their allies grow on the forest floor in filtered light and high humidity. You should try to duplicate this environment for successful culture in the home,

Requirements

Light - East or North windows are usually ideal for ferns. South or West windows may be used if there is a sheer curtain to screen out the hot sun. Most ferns like bright or filtered light and will do well under a Gro-Light.

Watering - Ferns require more water than many other houseplants. Allow most ferns to become moderately dry before watering. Tree ferns must be watered before they become dry. Maidenhair ferns are particularly sensitive to drying and may defoliate if allowed to become too dry.

Humidity - Ferns require high humidity, so steps must be taken to provide higher humidity in our dry winter homes. Avoid placing ferns near a heat source. Use a humidity tray which is a shallow tray with a layer of pebbles on which you set your fern plants, Keep the tray filled with water to just below the surface of the pebbles. Be sure the fern pots are not just sitting in the water. As the water evaporates, it creates humidity for the fern. Regular misting is also recommended. Lower settings on your thermostat can help increase relative humidity. Keep your settings at 65 degrees during the day and 60 degrees at night.

Care and Maintenance

Fertilize once a month with a soluble fertilizer such as Fertilome General Purpose 20-20-20. Avoid fertilizing from November through January when most fern plants, except those under Gro-Lights, are not growing.

Pot ferns in a loose peaty soil. You can use sterile potting soil mixed with one-third perlite. Use a low pot such as an azalea pot. Do not repot the fern until the pot becomes filled with roots.

Common Problems

Ferns rarely develop insect or disease problems. Most problems are caused by improper culture.

Foliage spindly, yellow or brown - light may not be sufficient. Move plant to a location for more sunlight.

Foliage "burn" - light may be too bright, or plant may be not getting enough water.

Insects - scale, mealy bugs, slugs, aphids. Ferns can be sensitive to insecticides. To avoid burning the foliage, avoid insecticides and use a forceful spray of water on the foliage at weekly intervals to wash off insects and eggs.

Fungus - rarely a problem on ferns in the house. Fungus is caused by too much moisture at the base of the plant. Allow the foliage to dry out, and then spray with a fungicide.

Consult one of our Green View associates or Illinois Certified Nursery Professionals for more information on the care of ferns.