Hardy Ferns

Athyrium filix-femina ‘Lady in Red’ (below)
Deciduous, ‘Lady in Red’ is also as tough and easy to grow for woodlands or the shady perennial garden. Vibrant burgundy color runs through the stems, contrasting not only with the 30-36” lime green fronds, but with other shade lovers such as Heucheras and Carex.
Plant 18” apart.

Adiantum pedatum
Northern Maidenhair Fern
As delicate as can be, this Maidenhair Fern is easy to grow with fan-shaped, swirling pinules to a height of 18”. The light green leaves have shiny dark stems and prefer rich moist soil in light to full shade. Don’t let this deciduous native dry out. Try it with Columbines, Old-fashioned Bleeding Hearts, a masculine Rodgersia and the leathery Bergenia for interesting textures in the woodland garden.
Plant 18” apart.

Zones 2 - 8  ☀  ⚠  ⚠  N  🍂

Athyrium filix-femina (above)
Lady Fern
A lacy, upright habit characterizes this most common and variable native fern which reaches 18–24”. It is a lovely lime green with reddish stems, and is as delicate-looking as it is possible. It can handle quite a bit of sun or shade in soil that is either too dry or too wet. Plant 18” apart.
Zones 3 - 8  ☀  ⚠  ⚠  N

Gold = Sun, Green = Shade  + Level deer resistance
(see page 7 for program details)
Athyrium niponicum var. pictum
Japanese Painted Fern
Perennial Plant of the Year 2004
Often considered the most decorative of ferns, this deciduous 18” Oriental beauty blends gray-green fronds with wine-red stems. It is slow spreading and thrives in shade or partial shade where soil is moist but well-drained. Its tri-color fronds emerge in the spring making it a perfect companion for early bulbs. Plant 18” apart.

Zones 3 - 8

Athyrium niponicum
‘Crested Surf’
Crested Japanese Painted Fern
Double crested frond tips with curvy leaflets add intriguing waviness and texture to this classic colorful fern. ‘Crested Surf’ blends uniqueness and vigor to offer a must have Japanese Painted Fern. Foliage grows 20-22” tall and spreads 28-30” wide. PPAF
Plant 30” apart.

Zones 3 - 8

Cyrtomium falcatum
‘Rochfordianum’
Japanese Holly Fern
Glossy, dark green leaves closely resemble Holly leaves and are so striking that we decided to include this evergreen fern that requires moderate wintertime temperatures to thrive. Fronds can be 24-30” in length. The leaf margins are coarsely fringed, grow thickly and quickly, and are definitely eye-catching. Plant 18” apart.

Zones 6 - 10

Athyrium otophorum
Limelight Lady Fern / Eared Lady Fern
The new foliage of this fern emerges lime green with reddish-pink stems and midribs. Mature foliage is darker green and the combination of old and new is quite attractive in containers or the mixed shady border. Clumping foliage grows 15-24” tall. Combine with Helleborus and Hosta. Plant 18” apart.

Zones 5 - 9

Dennstaedtia punctilobula
Hayscented Fern
Hayscented fern adds delicate texture to the understory when massed in the woodland garden. This groundcover fern will spread rapidly to fill a large area with its lime green deciduous lacy fronds. A native of wooded slopes, open woods and open meadows it can tolerate sun if kept moist. The fronds smell like fresh-cut hay if crushed. Height is 24-36”. Plant 18” apart.

Zones 3 - 8

Dryopteris x australis
Dixie Wood Fern
This naturally occurring hybrid of the Log Fern and the Southern Wood Fern is rich in color and is semi-evergreen with large, erect, tall fronds at 4-5’ when fully grown. This is a particularly big, strong fern for the woodland garden, or for naturalizing, and is found throughout the Southeastern U.S. Plant 24-36” apart.

Zones 5 - 9

Cyrtomium fortunei
Fortune’s Hardy Holly Fern
Holly branch-like fronds are stiff and upright to 2’ providing vertical structure and evergreen foliage for the woodland garden. Dullish green new fronds age to contrasting dark green. Prefers moist, humus-rich soil in partial to full shade. Plant with Dicentra eximia, Actaea racemosa and Epimedium rubrum.
Plant 24” apart.

Zones 5 - 9

Athyrium niponicum
‘Crested Surf’
Crested Japanese Painted Fern
Double crested frond tips with curvy leaflets add intriguing waviness and texture to this classic colorful fern. ‘Crested Surf’ blends uniqueness and vigor to offer a must have Japanese Painted Fern. Foliage grows 20-22” tall and spreads 28-30” wide. PPAF
Plant 30” apart.

Zones 5 - 9

Photo courtesy of Walters Gardens, Inc.
Dryopteris erythrosora ‘Brilliance’
So named due to its copper color when young, the semi-evergreen Autumn Fern matures to a lovely dark green. The 24” upright fronds take on an autumn color again in the fall. They thrive in open or dappled shade. All ferns grow best in soils with a high organic matter content. **Plant 18” apart.**

Brilliance Autumn Fern

Dryopteris marginalis
**Evergreen Wood Fern**
Also commonly called the Leatherwood Fern or Marginal Shield Fern, this native clump-grower has dark green, upright fronds between 2-3’ in length, and handles shade or part shade. Try with Hosta ‘Great Expectations’, Aralia ‘Sun King’ and Mertensia virginica. **Plant 18” apart.**

Dryopteris marginalis

Matteuccia pensylvanica
**Ostrich Fern**
Stately, upright 3–4’ fronds resembling ostrich feathers grow by underground runners that die back in winter and reappear vigorously the next spring. The native Ostrich Fern tolerates wet soil conditions so give it room in moist, rich soil and it will provide erosion control as well as a dramatic effect. While it prefers open shade, it will tolerate sun in swampy areas. **Plant 18” apart.**

Matteuccia pensylvanica

Onoclea sensibilis
**Sensitive Fern**
This fern gains its common name from its sensitivity to frost, dying back quickly when first touched by frost. It is tough and free running, spreading in moist soil where its 18” height makes it ideal as a shady groundcover in restoration projects that might include wet meadows, swamps, and open woods. Somewhat sun-tolerant, but must be kept evenly moist. **Plant 18” apart.**

Onoclea sensibilis

Osmunda cinnamomea
**Cinnamon Fern**
Cinnamon Fern, at 3–4’, makes an excellent backdrop in a woodland garden where it likes an acid soil with constant moisture, and can even handle wet, swampy land. Its name derives from the erect brown fronds that appear in the spring. Pale green initially, foliage darkens during the summer, turning a rich brown by autumn. It can handle some direct sun if the soil is kept moist. **Plant 18” apart.**

Zones 2 - 10

Zones 5 - 9

Zones 2 - 10

Zones 2 - 8

Zones 2 - 8

Gold = Sun, Green = Shade + Level deer resistance (see page 7 for program details)
**Polystichum acrostichoides**

**Christmas Fern**
Similar in looks to the familiar Boston Fern, this dark green, evergreen, native fern can tolerate rocky soil common to our forests. It thrives in shade, but will tolerate some sun if it stays moist. Its 2’ fronds are sometimes used in Christmas decorations.

As Nancy Mickey notes in *What’s Native* “settlers moving from the east coast to Kansas and Texas would keep seeing this remarkable fern in the woods and along shady pathways. Evergreen in winter, it was sometimes the only plant that was still green. From their Native American friends, they learned to use this plant for medicine and food. Settlers from New England carried their holiday traditions to their new homes, using the foliage of Christmas fern in holiday decorations”. **Plant 18” apart.**

** Zones 3 - 9 **

**Polystichum tsus-simense**

**Korean Rock Fern**
Considering that ferns have outlived the dinosaurs, it’s not surprising that this adaptation is evident in this neat, compact evergreen fern. It is of modest size at 12” and appreciates protection from winter winds. Gorgeous with the blue-green leaves of Hosta ‘Frances Williams’. **Plant 18” apart.**

** Zones 5 - 8 **

**Selaginella kraussiana**

**‘Aurea’ Krauss’ Gold Tips Spikemoss**
Create a striking contrast to dark leaved perennials or ferns with this fluffy lime green to golden yellow creeper. A vigorous filler growing 3-6” and spreading to 2’ in moist, well drained soil. Superb for containers, terrariums or in the shady garden. Evergreen in southern gardens. **Plant 12” apart.**

** Zones 6 - 10 **

**Thelypteris decursive-pinnata**

**Japanese Beech Fern**
Stiffly erect, lime green fronds characterize this non-evergreen fern, with its elegantly drooping tips. It is a tough fern of moderate height at 2’. Use in the shade garden with Heuchera ‘Green Spice’, Hosta ‘Halcyon’ and Iris cristata ‘Tennessee White’. **Plant 18” apart.**

** Zones 4 - 10 **

**Thelypteris noveboracensis**

**New York Fern**
This native of Eastern deciduous forest, bogs, swamps and field margins is tolerant of direct sun if kept moist and looks like Hayscented Fern but has fronds that taper at both ends. Deer and drought resistant and grows to a height of 1 - 2’. New York Fern forms large colonies and spreads easily. **Plant 18” apart.**

** Zones 3 - 8 **

**Osmunda regalis**

**Royal Fern**
This slow-spreading native fern can be grown in wet soil in sun to partial shade. Its lance-shaped, dark green fronds grow tall and erect between 3’-4’. The Royal Fern will do well in wet areas. Combine with Ligularia ‘The Rocket’ and Hosta ‘Elegans’. **Plant 18” apart.**

** Zones 2 - 10 **

**Polystichum polyblepharum**

**Tassel Fern**
Striking beauty and reliable hardiness are the complementary qualities of this 18-24” evergreen fern. Its dark green, shiny fronds form a rounded rosette shape. Showy and easy to grow, it prefers full to partial shade. **Plant 18” apart.**

** Zones 5 - 8 **