

Grow Tree Ferns successfully

Ideal plants for that cool, shady spot in your garden

Dicksonia antarctica or tree ferns are sold in increasing numbers. Unfortunately up to 80% are dying from poor siting or lack of knowledge of planting and watering requirements. Tree ferns are taken from the bush under strict licensing regulations by state park and wildlife services. All tree ferns sold must have a tag with serial number attached to indicate they have not been removed from the bush illegally. It is important that tree ferns are not allowed to die unnecessarily or the gardener will have wasted their money and be disappointed.

Purchasing:	Always select a healthy plant free from physical or insect damage. Purchase only from registered garden centres and ferns with a license tag.
Siting:	Tree ferns require shade, ample moisture and good drainage. They must be protected from severe frost, especially if the garden is low lying and/or in exposed areas such as new housing estates with little or no tree cover. It is important that direct frost does not settle on the fronds. Possibly under wide house eaves, under established trees or in a shade house.
Planting:	In heavy soils dig over deeply adding rotted organic matter such as compost, cow manure or rotted leaf litter with coarse river sand added. The use of Multicrop Ground-Breaker will be beneficial in clay soils. Place 1/3 of the trunk in the ground and immediately water in with Maxicrop Seaweed Plant Nutrient . This will encourage hormonal activity and new roots to develop.
Watering:	Tree ferns should be watered in the crown of the fern as well as around the base. If irrigation is used place a small circle of 4mm drip hose or similar dripper in the crown connected to the main supply. In summer if you do not have your own mulching material 'Pine Mulch' available from Canberra Sand & Gravel is ideal. Remember these are rain forest plants with natural mulch of leaf litter and regular rainfall. A deep watering round the base of the trunk once a week in summer is essential.
Fertilising:	Organic compost will supply the plant with most of its nutrients. However applying Maxicrop Seaweed Plant Nutrient on a regularly basis will be particularly beneficial with its high content of trace elements. It is suggested feeding on a minimum on a three monthly basis.
Pests & diseases:	Ferns are relatively free of problems with the exception of scale insects. This usually shows as a lack of health and vigour of the fronds. Ants often accompany the presence of scale. Ants do no damage to ferns but merely feed on the sugars sucked out of the scale insects. Do not confuse scale insects with brown seed spores on the underside of the fronds. If in doubt take a sample in a plastic bag to your nearest garden centre. Multicrop EcoPest will fix scale, mites and other sucking insects. Always follow exactly manufacturers recommendations.

Cedric D. Bryant *'Designing Gardens with Passion'*
Tel: 02 6241 8752 Internet: www.cedricbryant.com

Disclaimer: Every care has been given to the accuracy of the advice in this information sheet. Notwithstanding this, the reader relies on his/her judgement/skill in using the advice. No responsibility, whether expressed or implied, can be accepted on opinions or advice given. These notes are copyright to Cedric D. Bryant 'The Garden Designer' (2011).