

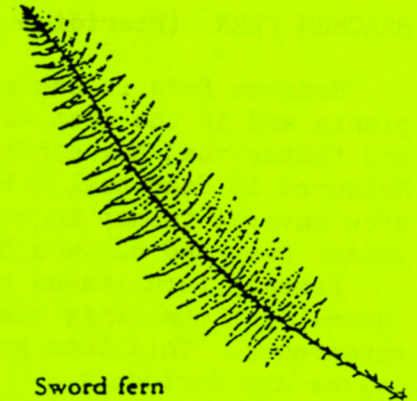
FERNS OF QUINAULT

The group of plants we call ferns inhabited the earth long before seed plants came to dominate. Ferns don't have flowers or fruit; instead they produce spores. The spores of most ferns show up as dark spots on the back of each leaf. The spores rub off the leaf and blow in the wind. Where they land, a small, fertile growth forms, and this growth produces the fertile cells that will create the fern as we see it.

The word "leaf" refers to the entire frond of the fern. The leaflets growing out of either side of the frond are called "pinnae". The "stalk" is the central portion of the fern from which everything else grows.

SWORD FERN (*Polystichum munitum*)

The sword fern is the most abundant fern on the nature trails here in Quinalt. In the winter, elk eat the tips of many of its leaves. Sword fern is evergreen, with thick, coarse leaves. Each pinna has saw-toothed edges, and is asymmetrical at the base (supposedly like the hilt of a sword, which is how the plant got its name). Sword fern prefers to grow in moist, shady places, and in some areas will grow to be 3 feet tall.



Sword fern

LICORICE FERN (*Polypodium glycyrrhiza*)

Licorice fern grows on rocks, logs, and trees such as maples and alders. It is most often found growing in mossy places because the mosses keep the fern roots moist. Licorice ferns are epiphytes, which means that they use other plants (or objects) for support but they obtain their nutrients from the air.

Licorice fern leaves are smooth and dark. The pinnae are wider at the base than at the tip, and are not separated at the stalk. The leaves are 4" to 32" and they sometimes dry up during dry summer months. Despite this occasional summer drying, they are still considered evergreen.



Licorice fern

DEER FERN (*Blechnum spicant*)

Deer fern is an important food source for elk and deer in the winter. It is the only northern species of a genus containing mostly tropical plants.

Deer fern is distinctive because it has two types of fronds. The fertile fronds are the taller of the two, and grow out of the center of each clump. The fertile fronds have thin, widely separated pinnae which somewhat resemble a fish skeleton. The fertile fronds dry out in the summer. The evergreen sterile leaves are shorter and thicker and surround the fertile ones. Deer ferns can grow to be 50" long, but in this area they are usually around 8" long or less.



Deer fern

LADY FERN (*Athyrium filix-femina*)

Lady fern leaves are 16" to 80" tall and lacy in appearance, like the bracken fern. The latin name means "fern-woman" as the leaves are narrow at both ends. The roots of the lady fern have a long history of use in herbal medicines.

BRACKEN FERN (*Pteridium aquilinum*)

Bracken fern is one of the world's most abundant plants and is the most widespread fern. It grows taller and faster than any other fern. One sample in Washington Measured 16 feet tall! Bracken fern has been known to grow several inches in one day. It is toxic and will poison deer and elk who browse too heavily on the foliage.

Bracken fern leaves are 24" to 80" tall and two or (usually) three times compound which gives them a lacy appearance. This fern prefers open areas and it's leaves are deciduous.

MAIDENHAIR FERN (*Adiantum pedatum*)

Maidenhair fern is named for its roots, which have fine, dark hairs. It prefers wet soils and rocky places. Stream banks are good areas to look for this fern.

The pinnae of maidenhair fern are fan-shaped, dissected on one side, and smooth on the other. They grow out of a shiny black stalk. The stalks have traditionally been important in Makah and Quinault basketry, because they retain their color even when dry. maidenhair is a deciduous fern.

OAK FERN (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*)

The low growing oak fern often grows in large yellow-green patches in moist woods and rocky places. Its leaves are deciduous and delicate in appearance. Each frond is made up of three similar triangular leaves, each containing finely dissected pinnae.

WOOD FERN (*Dryopteris austriacaca*)

Wood fern is recognized by the scales on the stem, and the asymmetrical bottom pair of pinnae. The dark green leaves grow to 40" and form large upright plants. This fern will act as a laxative if eaten.

