

Ornamental ferns and propagation



Propagating Ferns: Growing Ferns From Spores And Division

- Ferns are an ancient plant family over 300 million years old.
- There are over 12,000 species in almost all parts of the world.
- They provide airy foliage and texture for the home gardener, both as indoor ^[1] and outdoor ^[2] plants.
- Propagating ferns is easiest by division but they can also be grown from their spores.
- Growing ferns from spores, which takes many months up to a year, is an interesting process that provides an educational experience for the whole family.

What are Fern Spores?

- In nature, these lovely plants reproduce through their spores.
- Fern spores are the tiny genetic bases for new plants.
- They are found contained in a casing, called sporangia, and grouped into bunches, called sori, on the underside of the leaves.
- Spores look like little dots and may be harvested for fern spore propagation by the intrepid gardener.
- Timing and some skill are required when propagating ferns with these minute specks.

Care and Propagation of Ferns

- Ferns are easy to grow and thrive in indirect light and high humidity. The soil doesn't need to be very wet, but humidity is a crucial requirement for the plants.
- Ferns don't need to be fertilized in the garden but potted plants many benefit from once a month feedings with a liquid fertilizer diluted by half.
- Prune off the fronds as they die back to make room for new growth and to improve appearance.
- Gardeners can approach propagating ferns by division or from growing the spores

Growing Ferns from Spores

- Harvest spores when they are plump and slightly furry in appearance. Remove a healthy frond and put it in a plastic bag to dry out. When the leaf is dry, shake the bag to let the dry spores float down to the bottom.
- Place the spores in a peat ^[3]mixture in an unglazed pot. Set the pot in a saucer of water to allow the moisture to seep up through the entire mixture. Next, put the moistened pot into a plastic bag in a sunny, warm location of at least 65 F. (18 C.).
- Fern spore propagation will take some time. Watch for a slime-like green coating on the surface of the peat. This is the beginning of the process and over many months you will begin to see small fronds appearing out of the slime.

How to Propagate a Fern with Division

- A vigorous, healthy plant is more quickly reproduced from division. Any gardener that knows how to divide ^[4] a perennial will recognize how to propagate a fern.
- In very early spring, dig up or remove the plant from its pot. Cut it into sections between the rhizomes, leaving several sets of healthy leaves on each section. Repot in peat and make sure it is moderately moist while the new plant establishes.
- Care and propagation of ferns couldn't be simpler. This durable plant group will provide you with a lifetime of beauty and an unending supply of plants.

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