

***NATIVE FERNS\* Recommended  
for Use in Calvert County***

UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND  
EXTENSION



***Adiantum pedatum – Maidenhair Fern.*** Dark 1’-2’ stems support delicate fans of gray-green fronds. It grows in clumps and makes a lovely, delicate groundcover in Part to Full shade and moist but well-drained acidic soil.

***Asplenium platyneuron – Ebony Spleenwort.*** 1’-1.5’ tall. This small fern with dark stems (thus, the name Ebony) grows in rocky areas in the wild in Sun to Part Shade to Shade. It prefers moist soil but does not like to be too wet. Makes a nice addition to a rock garden. Evergreen but shrinks during the winter.

***Athyrium filix-femina – Northern Lady Fern.*** Prefers Part Shade in moist to wet soil where it can reach 3’ in height. Will grow in sandy bogs. Stems are usually dark and leaves are very attractive. A good groundcover for shady areas and pairs well with Hay-Scented Ferns which are a lighter green. Rain Garden

***Denstaedtia punctiloba – Hay-Scented Fern.*** Will grow in full sun in average soil but prefers Part Shade with some moisture. Good drought resistance. Grows normally in open woods and fields. Leaves are light green and a “patch” makes an attractive groundcover or understory planting. Rain Garden

***Dryopteris sp. – Wood Ferns.*** There are several species native to our area. The *D. cristata* (Crested Wood or Shield Fern) reaches 2.5’ in moist to wet very acid soil in sun to shade. *D. intermedia* (Evergreen Wood Fern) grows to about the same height in Dry to Wet soil in Part Shade to Full Shade. *D. marginalis* (Evergreen Shield Fern) grows a bit taller in dry to moist soil in Part Shade to Shade.

***Matteuccia struthiopteris - Ostrich fern.*** This fern is found in forested wetlands or along creeks and rivers. In early spring, fiddleheads can be harvested for salad if the population is large enough. This is one of the taller ferns, growing 24-72” tall; it has dark green fronds. Rain Garden

***Onoclea sensibilis- Sensitive Fern.*** Moist to wet soil in sun or shade but must have adequate moisture for sun. Grows in woods, swamps, fresh tidal and non-tidal swamps from 1’-3.5’ tall. Large triangular leaves are distinctive. It can spread quickly in wet soil. It is called “sensitive” because it turns yellow at the first cold weather in the fall or when it is too dry. Rain Garden

***Osmunda cinnamomea – Cinnamon Fern.*** Grows in moist to wet soil in sun or shade, but is drought tolerant. Will attain 5’ in full sun and wet soil. Its common name comes from the cinnamon-colored “tips” on back of the leaves and the tall, brownish woolly fertile fronds that add drama and color to a fern garden. Rain Garden.

***Osmunda regalis* – Royal Fern.** Will grow in sun or shade in moist to wet conditions. In full sun and swampy conditions, it can reach 6’ in height and can be used as a dramatic focal point in a garden or a Rain Garden. It will withstand flooding for a few days. Rain Garden

***Phegopteris (Dryopteris) hexagonoptera* - Broad beech fern.** This fern has a winged stem and grows 15-24” tall. It grows best in partial shade with moist soil.

***Polystichum acrostichoides* – Christmas Fern.** The large leaves fan out from the center and mature plants can reach 3’ across in ideal conditions. It grows in moist soil among tree roots but withstands dry shade and is drought tolerant when established. Christmas Ferns work well as foundation plantings and can withstand runoff from downspouts as long as they do not stand in water.

***Pteridium aquilinum* - Bracken fern.** This fern grows 18-20” tall and has coarse 3 branched triangular fronds. It grows in dry, sandy soil and in large open areas of dry sandy infertile soil, it will out compete shorter plant species.

***Thelypteris noveboracensis* New York fern.** A very hardy fern that is easy to grow and may need control when grown in partial shade. The yellow-green fronds grow from 12-24” tall; this plant does best in moist soil.

***Woodsia obtusa* - Blunt-lobed woodsia.** This fern is good for rock gardens and will grow in moist to dry soil in partial shade to partial sun. This is one of the smaller species of fern growing 5-16” tall. The fronds are grayish green and semi-evergreen.

***Woodwardia areolata* Netted chain fern.** Grows in sun to shade in moist to wet soil – wet, acidic conditions are ideal. This fern grown 12-24” tall and the fronds are triangular and dark, glossy green.

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Compiled by Calvert County Master Gardeners.  
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Source: [Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping – Chesapeake Bay Watershed](http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/pdf/NativePlantsforWildlifeHabitatandConservationLandscaping.pdf), U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

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Other books and catalogues were used for descriptive information.

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