

Osmunda spectabilis

Royal Fern

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

One of North America's largest native ferns is frequent to common in moist woods through much of the Mid-Atlantic Region. Previously known as *Osmunda regalis*, its unique fronds are cut into rounded leaflets. Another common name "flowering fern" refers to its tassel-like fertile clusters.



Fern	Fiddleheads, Unfurling Fronds, Clump, Cluster
Height: 2–6 feet	 
Spread: 2–3 feet	
Bloom Color: Non-flowering	
Characteristics	 
Deciduous perennial in tall, erect clumps	
Woolly hair covered fiddleheads emerge early spring	
Pink leaflets unfurl on green to wine stalks and become bright green, well separated & rounded	
Spores borne in green, tassel-like clusters from April to June mature to brown	
Foliage changes to yellow or brown in fall	
Spreads slowly by rhizomes	
Attributes	
Tolerates wet soil, sun (with sufficient soil moisture), dense shade, drought, flooding (of brief duration), and rabbits; no serious pests or diseases; deer rarely damage	
Once eaten, fiddleheads now deemed carcinogenic	
Rhizomes used as fiber for potting orchids	
Provides cover for wildlife	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements: Rich, acidic soils	<i>Hedera helix</i> - English Ivy
Light Requirements: Partial Shade, Shade	<i>Liriope spicata</i> - Creeping Lily-Turf
Water Requirements: Moist, Wet	<i>Vinca minor</i> - Periwinkle
With constant moisture can reach 6 feet tall	
Use in rain, water, and woodland gardens, along fresh water's edge, and to control erosion	
Hardiness: USDA Zones 3–9	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Mary Free, Quarry Shade Garden