




Athyrium asplenoides (Southern) Lady Fern

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic



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Southern Lady Fern (formerly *A. filix-femina*) typically grows in wooded ravines, moist woods, and floodplains from southern New England to the southern United States. This native is common throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region, except for northern/northeastern Pennsylvania where it is mostly absent. The delicate and graceful appearance of feathery fronds gives rise to its name.

Fern	Fiddlehead, Pinnae (sterile & fertile), Clump
Height: 1–3 feet	
Spread: 1–2½ feet	
Bloom Color: Non-flowering	
Characteristics	
Deciduous perennial in whorled clumps	
Fiddleheads appear in spring covered in ramenta that remain scattered on the short, reddish stipes	
Lacy, light green pinnae (leaflets) alternate on grooved, glabrous (or with scales), light green or red rachis ; monomorphic, lanceolate , bipinnate-pinnatifid fronds	
Sori (short & straight or long & recurved) on undersides of fertile pinnae in summer	
Spreads by rhizomes , sometimes aggressively	
Attributes	
Tolerates drier soil than some other ferns, dense shade, and rabbits; no serious pests or diseases; deer rarely damage; low maintenance	
Therapeutic uses	
Large colonies provide cover for wildlife	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Rich, well-drained	<i>Athyrium</i> cultivars
Light Requirements : Partial Shade, Shade	<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> - Japanese Painted Fern
Water Requirements : Moist, Wet	<i>Athyrium otophorum</i> - Eared Lady Fern
Shelter from wind so that fronds do not break	<i>Athyrium vidalii</i> - Japanese Lady Fern
Divide clumps in spring every few years to reposition crowns at soil level	
Use in large-scale rain or woodland gardens	
Hardiness : USDA Zones 4–8	
<i>developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria</i>	

Images by Elaine Mills, National Arboretum and Meadowlark Botanical Garden and by Mary Free (middle left), Quarry Shade Garden