

Indoor Ferns

Alsophila - Australian Treeferns

Pteris - Table Ferns

Adiantum - Maidenhair Ferns

Platycerium - Staghorn Ferns

Devalia - Footed Ferns

Asplenium - Birdsnest Ferns

General

Nothing gives the feeling of green lushness indoors like a collection of well grown, healthy ferns. Although there are many different ferns, and many of them are not even related, quite a few can be grown indoors if you pay some attention to their specific needs. Here are a few basic recommendations:

Location

Most ferns grow in bright, shady spots in their native habitat and appreciate the same sort of conditions indoors. A draft-less north or east window is an ideal location for many ferns, as is a curtain-filtered window facing west or south. Expose fern to no more than 1 to 2 hours of direct sun. It's a good idea to turn your fern plants occasionally, or they will tend to start growing lopsidedly.

Soil

Many ferns have specific soil preferences, but almost all will grow well in a peat-based, well-drained soilless mix. Ferns need a soil that remains moist, but also drains well so that the plant's roots are not stagnant.

Water

If your house temperatures remain above 60°, then ferns need to be kept moist without being sodden. Depending on the humidity level of your home, you may have to water your plants every couple of days, or perhaps only once a week. It's best to watch the plants and check them daily when you first purchase them to see how long it takes for them to dry very slightly. Ferns appreciate tepid water rather than cold water from the tap. The important thing is that many ferns will not revive if they dry out. Maidenhair fern, especially, is sensitive to dryness.

Fertilizer

Since ferns do not flower, keeping them lush and green is the main concern. A high nitrogen fertilizer will keep plants green and growing. If ferns are going through a rest period when they are not actively growing, do not fertilize until new growth resumes. Use a 30-10-10 fertilizer, 1 teaspoon per gallon of water.

Temperature

Normal room temperatures of 65-70° are fine for most ferns. If temperatures drop consistently below that in your home, your plants may go into a rest period. Be sure not to over-water when plants are resting.

Humidity

Humidity levels are very important for certain fern groups. To increase humidity in a dry home, try growing your ferns on a pebble tray. Get a large plastic saucer. Fill it with one inch of fine gravel. Keep water in the saucer at all times, but keep the level **BELOW** the surface of the stones. Set your fern plant on the stones. The evaporating water will keep the air around the fern humidified. A few pieces of charcoal will keep the water from growing stagnant. There are also some types of ferns that require less humidity, such as the Boston fern and Holly fern.