

# Ferns

## FERNS KEY

- A. Fronds (leaves) arise singly from rhizome (creeping rootstock, often underground)
  - B. Fronds once-pinnate (divided once), often growing in moss of deciduous trees, such as vine maple—**LICORICE** fern
  - BB. Fronds 2 to 3 times pinnate, often quite large and triangular—**BRACKEN** fern
- AA. Fronds clumped together in a cluster
  - C. Fronds once-pinnate
    - D. Pinnae short-stalked, first upper pinnule (tooth) longer than the rest—**SWORD** fern
    - DD. Spreading sterile fronds; more narrow and upright fertile fronds—**DEER** fern
  - CC. Fronds 2 or 3 pinnate
    - E. Unique palmlike, circular-patterned fronds; dark, wiry stipe(stem)—**MAIDENHAIR** fern
    - EE. Fronds often large, tapering at both ends; sori (spore clusters) elongated or horse-shoe shaped—**LADY** fern
    - EEE. Fronds triangular, lowest pair of pinnae has first pinnules on lower side 2-3 times longer than pinnules above—**SPINY WOOD** fern

### LICORICE FERN

*Polypodium vulgare* (*P. glycyrrhiza*)

**Identification:** Once pinnate, pinnae join midrib in zig-zag pattern; fronds usually less than 12 inches, few and scattered. Often found growing out of moss on bigleaf or vine maple; wither in dry weather; sori large, uncovered, in parallel rows.

**Location:** Moist areas, especially on deciduous tree trunks along Drift Creek..

**Uses:** Licorice flavor of rootstock used by early settlers to flavor tobacco and some use as medicine for colds and sore throats.

[drawing: OSU Ext. Bull. 785 p. 9, lower right corner]

[photo 113.1324]

### Licorice Fern



## BRACKEN FERN

*Pteridium aquilinum*

**Identification:** Large, coarse, 3-pinnately compound, triangular shaped fronds from wide-spreading underground rhizomes. A worldwide, weedy, hard to eliminate species. Usual height 2 to 6 feet. Survives fire and often abundant on recently burned areas.

**Location:** Very common throughout Drift Creek Camp.

**Uses:** Native Americans dug up rhizomes, roasted them, and extracted starch. Young shoots sometimes eaten, but may poison grazing cattle. Often used by campers for bedding.

[photo 113.1389]



*Bracken Fern*

## SWORD FERN

*Polystichum munitum*

**Identification:** Once pinnate (frond divided once into pinnae). Pinnae short-stalked, slightly toothed, the first upper tooth longer than the rest; orange-brown sori in rows near margin on bottom of leaf: evergreen, large fronds in a cluster.

**Location:** Throughout Drift Creek Camp; best under dense fir, spruce, and hemlock.

**Uses:** Florists use sword fern for sprays and wreaths, a multimillion dollar harvest in Oregon and Washington; maybe 1% of the fern population harvested.

[photo 112.1277]

[drawing OSU Ext. Bull. 785 p. 3 center bottom]



*Sword Fern*

## DEER FERN

*Blechnum spicant*

**Identification:** Once pinnate, pinnae of fertile fronds narrower and more upright than sterile, spreading sterile fronds. 1-2 feet high, in deep shade; associates with sword fern under spruce, fir and hemlock. Sori continuous, near margin, covered by a continuous, translucent, brown indusium..

**Location:** Very common throughout the forest.

**Uses:** Food for deer and elk, especially in winter. Young leaves chewed by some Native Americans as hunger suppressant and as medicine for skin sores. (Deer have been seen by some rubbing their antler stubs on deer fern after shedding antlers – Pojar and Mackinnon p. 420).

[photo 113.1318 or 113.1395]

[drawing Taylor p 75]



*Deer Fern*

## MAIDENHAIR FERN

*Adiantum pedatum (A. aleuticum)*

**Identification:** Twice pinnate, unique fan or palm like circular pattern; dark, wiry stipe; pinnae fringed along upper margins covering sori; leaves resist wetting.

**Location:** Rich, moist forests, especially abundant on Narrows Trail. Prefer wet banks and rock outcrops. A beautiful colony under Drift Creek Falls.

**Uses:** Very popular in cultivation. Native Americans dried berries on beds of maidenhair fronds; also used for baskets, and as a medicine for strength and endurance, especially for dancers in winter. Formerly used by herbalists to make cough syrup; has some emetic properties.

[photo 112.1281]

[drawing Taylor p. 66]



*Maidenhair Fern*

**LADY FERN** *Athyrium felix-femina*

**Identification:** Large fronds (up to 6 feet) clustered, erect, lance-shaped, tapering at both ends, 2-3 times pinnate, sori oblong to horseshoe-shaped.

**Location:** Very common throughout Drift Creek Camp, especially along entrance road.

**Uses:** Aboriginal people used fronds for laying out and covering food, especially berries for drying. Fiddle heads, when small, eaten boiled, baked, or raw, with grease. Rootstock reported to have medicinal value.

[drawing OSU Ext. Bull 785 p 5 upper right corner]

[photo 112.1290]



*Lady Fern*

**SPINY WOOD FERN, SHIELD FERN**

*Dryopteris expansa* (*D. austriaca*, *D. dilatata*)

**Identification:** Triangular frond, 3-pinnate, the lowest pinnae have pinnules on the lower side which are two to three times as long as the pinnules on the upper side. Leafstalk almost as long as the blade. Sori horseshoe shaped. Rhizomes stout, erect, with chaffy, brown scales. Highly variable.

**Location:** Hillside above Lodge. Generally small and rather scarce.

**Uses:** Pineapple-like rootstocks of some forms were eaten for their starch.

[drawings: Taylor p. 93, OSU Ext. Bull. 785 p7 upper right]

[photo 113.1390]



*Spiny Wood Fern,  
Shield Fern*