

Lady Fern

Athyrium filix-femina

North American Native



Athyrium (a-thi-ree-um)
Possibly from the Greek *athyros*, doorless, referring to the late opening indusium.

filix-femina (fi-likes fem-mi-na) referring to the delicate fronds.



About the Species:

Zones: 4 - 8 **Height:** 18 – 24” **Spacing:** 18”

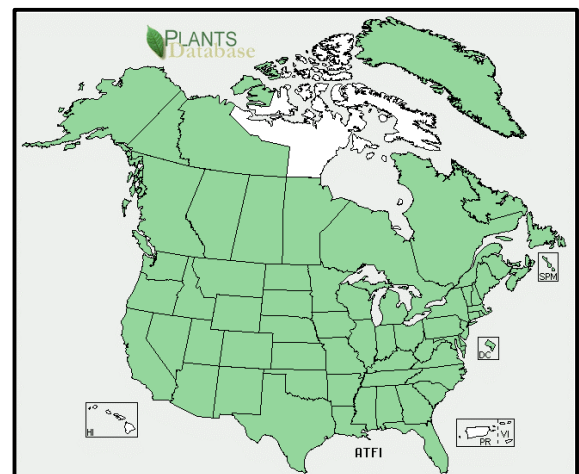
Family: Dryopteridaceae

The Lady Fern has lacy lime green fronds with reddish stems. One of the most popular ferns during the Victorian era, very dainty and delicate looking, this fern is quite hardy. As a pioneer species, Lady Fern has been known to grow in cracks and crevices between rocks. The fronds are brittle and will snap off if mishandled. Growing to 18-24 inches high, they will grow into a deciduous asymmetric clump formed by short-creeping rhizomes. The Lady Fern continues to send up fronds all during the growing season.

Habitat: Lady Fern is found naturally growing in meadows, open thickets, moist woodlands, ravines, and swamps throughout North America.

In the Garden: In water retentive soils, this fern will handle quite a bit of sun. It prefers light to full shade in average soils.

Other Uses: Native Americans used *Athyrium filix-femina* for a variety of reasons. A tea made from the roots acted as a diuretic and a tea made from the stems was used to ease labor pains. It was also used to treat many gynecological related ailments including cancer of the womb and during childbirth. New shoots and the rhizomes were roasted, peeled, and the centers eaten. The leaves were used to clean eels and fish after being caught and to cover camas while baking. Fronds were used to separate food layers in steaming pits. They were also used to cover berry baskets. According to some folklore, finding this fern growing wild was considered to be a sign that water was nearby.



USDA Plants Database