

# Royal Fern

## *Osmunda regalis*

North American Native



*Osmunda* Origin of meaning is uncertain.

*regalis* (ray-gah-lis) meaning royal



### About the Species:

**Zones:** 2 - 10 **Height:** 3 - 4' **Spacing:** 18"

#### Family: Osmundaceae

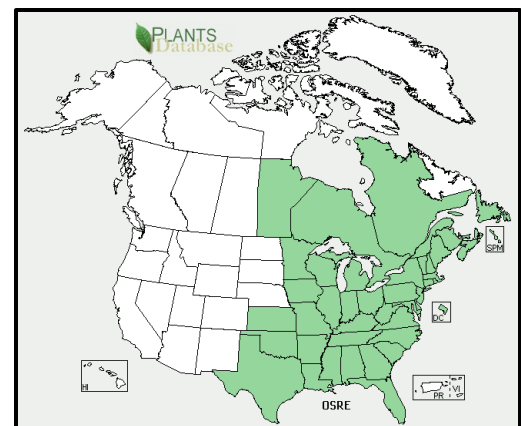
The Osmundaceae Family of ferns are the most widespread ferns and grow on all continents except Antarctica. Royal Ferns are the only vascular plant reported to grow on all the continents except Australia. *Osmunda regalis* is a handsome fern that does not really look fern-like. The fronds resemble the leaves of the Locust Tree, (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), and the habit is almost shrub like. This fern is also made up of fertile and sterile fronds. The sterile fronds will grow to 3-4' tall and sometimes, in damp sheltered places, this fern will grow to be 8-10' high. The fertile fronds will develop in April. Stiff and upright, this fern makes a formal statement in the shady garden.

**Habitat:** Found growing in swamps, marshes and stream banks throughout Eastern and Central North America.

**In the Garden:** Grow in moist to wet soils, full shade to part shade. *Osmundas* are frequently referred to as a flowering fern due to the appearance of the fertile fronds.

#### Legends in Their Own Time.

Many legends exist of the origination of Royal Fern. One legend in Great Britain tells of the wife and daughter of Osmunder, a waterman of Loch Tyne, who took refuge among Osmunda (the fern) during an invasion of the Danes. Another legend describes Osmunda as the Saxon equivalent of the Norse god Thor. In Europe, Royal Fern became known as St. Christopher's herb as Christianity spread. The legend states that travelers, including the Christ-child were carried safely over rivers by the saint as a test of faith. St. Christopher is the patron saint of waterman, seafarers, boatmen and all other travelers. According to Slavic mythology, the sporangia (the fertile frond) of Royal Fern, called "Peron's flowers", had assorted magical powers including giving their holders the ability to defeat demons, fulfill wishes, unlock secrets, and understand the language of trees.



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