

Lady Fern

Athyrium filix-femina

Plants · Deciduous fern · fronds May–Oct



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An elegant fern with soft, pale green, finely divided fronds, much more delicately cut and less leathery than male fern, arranged in a loose shuttlecock. Lady fern grows in damp shaded woodland, along burn sides and on wet banks around Dumfries, preferring wetter, more sheltered ground than male fern.

BEHAVIOUR

The fronds are thin-textured and lack the leathery toughness of male and buckler ferns, so they scorch in exposed positions and collapse early in autumn — often the first fern in a wood to go over. Spores are borne in elongated, slightly curved clusters, which distinguishes it from the kidney-shaped clusters of Dryopteris. The 'lady' name simply contrasts with the coarser male fern.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Lady ferns (Athyriaceae)
FROND	40–120 cm, finely divided
STATUS	Native; common in damp shaded woodland