Plant Finder

Holly Fern

Arachniodes simplicior

Holly Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 24 inches

Spread: 28 inches

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 6b

Other Names: East Indian Holly Fern

Description:

A very handsome evergreen fern, this variety has tapering ladder like leaves of forest green, creating wonderful texture; excellent massed or as groundcover in shaded borders or featured in shady areas of rock gardens; great container plant as well

Ornamental Features

Holly Fern is primarily valued in the garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its attractive ferny compound leaves emerge light green in spring, turning forest green in color the rest of the year.

Landscape Attributes

Holly Fern is an herbaceous evergreen perennial with a shapely form and gracefully arching foliage. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Holly Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Groundcover
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

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Planting & Growing

Holly Fern will grow to be about 24 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 28 inches. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round.

This plant does best in partial shade to shade. It requires an evenly moist well-drained soil for optimal growth, but will die in standing water. It is particular about its soil conditions, with a strong preference for rich, acidic soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution, and will benefit from being planted in a relatively sheltered location. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone over the growing season to conserve soil moisture. This species is not originally from North America, and parts of it are known to be toxic to humans and animals, so care should be exercised in planting it around children and pets. It can be propagated by division.

Holly Fern is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It can be used either as 'filler' or as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, depending on the height and form of the other plants used in the container planting. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.