Lindley's
Nursery and
Garden Center

Sword Fern

Polystichum munitum



Sword Fern
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 4 feet

Spacing: 4 feet

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 5b

Other Names: Shield Fern

Description:

A lovely evergreen fern; fine textured fronds are toothed and glossy; excellent massed or as groundcover in shaded borders or featured in shady areas of rock gardens

Ornamental Features

Sword Fern is primarily valued in the landscape or garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its glossy ferny pinnately compound leaves remain forest green in color throughout the year.

Landscape Attributes

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



Sword Fern
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

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.

Sword Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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

Planting & Growing

Sword Fern will grow to be about 5 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 feet. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 4 feet apart. 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 full shade. Keep it well away from hot, dry locations that receive direct afternoon sun or which get reflected sunlight, such as against the south side of a white wall. It requires an evenly moist well-drained soil for optimal growth, but will die in standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich 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 native to parts of North America. It can be propagated by division.

Sword Fern is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor containers and hanging baskets. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. 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.