



# Onoclea sensibilis

## Sensitive or Bead Fern

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

This fern,\* with distinctive, deeply lobed, chartreuse sterile fronds, is an excellent ground cover for low moist garden areas. Because of its sensitive nature, it grows best sheltered from prevailing winds in soil that does not dry out. Fertile fronds are bead-like, hence its other common name.



Fern	Fiddleheads, Persistent Fertile & Sterile Fronds	
Height: 1–4 feet	 	
Spread: 2–3 feet		
Bloom Color: Non-flowering		
Characteristics		
<a href="#">Deciduous</a> , coarse-textured <a href="#">perennial</a> with creeping habit		
Pale red <a href="#">fiddleheads</a> open to sterile, mostly <a href="#">pinnatifid fronds</a> w/ nearly <a href="#">opposite leaflets</a> w/ often wavy margins, winged <a href="#">rachis</a> (midrib), long <a href="#">stipe</a> (stalk)		
Shorter, erect fertile fronds with hardened, bead-like <a href="#">sporangia</a> , <a href="#">persist</a> through winter		
Colonizes by creeping <a href="#">rhizomes</a> and spores, spreading aggressively in optimum conditions		
Attributes		
Tolerates rabbits, heavy shade, <a href="#">clay</a> and wet soil, Black Walnut; deer rarely damage	Excellent Replacement for	
No serious pests or diseases		<i>Cyrtomium fortunei</i> - Japanese Holly Fern
Very sensitive to drought and first fall frost		<i>Deparia petersenii</i> - Japanese Lady Fern
Provides ground-level shelter for salamanders and frogs		<i>Dryopteris erythrosora</i> - Autumn Fern
Growing and Maintenance Tips		
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Rich, acidic, well-drained		
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Partial Shade, Shade		
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Moist, Wet		
Maintain consistent soil moisture and protect from wind		
Use in rain gardens, wet woodlands, or alongside streams or ponds		
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 4–8	*Mostly common throughout the Mid-Atlantic.	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria		

Images by Elaine Mills, Glencarlyn Library Community Garden