

# Osmunda spectabilis

## Royal Fern

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

One of North America's largest **native** ferns is frequent to common in moist woods through much of the Mid-Atlantic Region. Previously known as *Osmunda regalis*, its unique fronds give this fern a shrub-like appearance. Another common name "flowering fern" refers to its tassel-like fertile clusters.



Fern	Fiddleheads, Unfurling Fronds, Clump, Cluster
Height: 2–6 feet	 
Spread: 2–3 feet	
Bloom Color: Non-flowering	 
Characteristics	
<a href="#">Deciduous perennial</a> in tall, erect clumps	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>
<a href="#">Wooly</a> hair covered <a href="#">fiddleheads</a> emerge early spring	
<a href="#">Bipinnate</a> lamina (blades) with green to wine <a href="#">rachis</a> with <a href="#">alternate</a> , egg-shaped to <a href="#">lanceolate</a> , <a href="#">glabrous</a> , finely-serrated pinnules (sub-leaflets)	
Green, bead-like capsules containing spores on tassel-like clusters April to June, mature to brown	
Foliage changes to yellow or brown in fall	
Spreads slowly by <a href="#">rhizomes</a>	
Attributes	
Tolerates wet <a href="#">soil</a> , sun (with sufficient soil moisture), dense shade, drought, flooding (of brief duration), and rabbits; no serious pests or diseases; <a href="#">deer</a> rarely damage	
Once eaten, fiddleheads now deemed carcinogenic	
Rhizomes used as fiber for potting orchids	
Provides cover for wildlife	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Rich, acidic soils	<i>Osmunda japonica</i> - Asian Royal Fern
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Partial Shade, Shade	<i>Osmunda regalis</i> - non-native species
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Moist, Wet	
With constant moisture can reach 6 feet tall	
Use in rain, water, and woodland gardens, along fresh water's edge, and to control erosion	
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 3–9	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Mary Free, Quarry Shade Garden