Homestead Gardens Plant Finder

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Eared Lady Fern - New For 2026!

Athyrium otophorum



Eared Lady Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 18 inches

Spread: 18 inches

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 4b

Other Names: Auriculate Lady Fern, Asian Lady Fern

Description:

Attractive fronds emerge light-green and turn darker green, giving a two-toned appearance; clump-forming and dense, perfect for shady spots; beautiful in masses on the edges of ponds or streams

Ornamental Features

Eared Lady Fern is primarily valued in the garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its attractive ferny bipinnately compound leaves emerge light green in spring, turning green in color with pointy burgundy spines throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Eared Lady Fern is a dense herbaceous fern with a shapely form and gracefully arching fronds. It brings an extremely fine and delicate texture to the garden composition and should be used to full effect.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and usually looks its best without pruning, although it will tolerate pruning. 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.

Eared Lady Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Border Edging
- General Garden Use
- Groundcover
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Eared Lady Fern will grow to be about 18 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 18 inches. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in partial shade to shade. It prefers to grow in moist to wet soil, and will even tolerate some 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.