



Mounting Staghorn Ferns

Staghorn ferns are a typical epiphyte, which is a plant that anchors itself onto another plant or object for the sole purpose of support. Like other ferns, orchids, and bromeliads, many epiphytes are considered parasites that feed off of a host plant.

Epiphytes do not feed on their support plant; they merely grow in the organic matter which collects around stems, bark, or other suitable surfaces from falling leaves, dead insects and fallen flowers and fruits.

HABIT OF GROWTH

Most staghorn fern varieties grow with long, deeply lobed fronds; however, there are a few varieties that grow erect, such as 'Grande' and 'Angelense' with spatulate fronds. Staghorn fern leaves emerge outward from the base. This ensures that all offspring from the parent will fall from the original plant and be dispersed into the ecosystem. Mounting staghorn ferns onto a suitable surface allows us to enjoy their tropical effect in our urban gardens.

Staghorn ferns generally produce two types of leaves: sterile and fertile. The sterile leaves usually form a flat shield that covers the roots and enhances its attachment to a support. The fertile leaves emerge from the center of the shield-like sterile leaves and form the staghorn 'antlers' that are so distinctive of this fern. When mature, the fertile leaves produce brown patches on their undersides. These contain almost microscopic spores that fall when ripe and produce new plants. The brown patches are natural and healthy, so do not attempt to spray or wipe them off.

When mounting your staghorn, it is important to distinguish between the shield and the fertile leaves. Follow the directions below and your mounted

staghorn will grow into a beautifully exotic plant.

Note: The shield, or the round growth from which the fronds protrude, periodically dies and is replaced by a new, larger shield.

LIGHT, WATER & SOIL

Staghorn ferns perform best in low to medium light. Bright light will fade the leaves.

Keep your staghorn fern slightly moist at all times.

Staghorn ferns are normally attached to a slab or branch. Place the plant on a cushion of long-fingered sphagnum moss and tie it with nylon fishing line until the plant attaches itself roots

Staghorns can be grown in soil, but they do better on a slab.

FERTILIZING

We advise using fish emulsion or tropical plant food applied according to label instructions. Consult an Heirloom Gardens Texas Certified Nursery Professional for more information.

INSECTS

Staghorn ferns are relatively insect resistant. However, should you pests, contact us for proper care instructions.

Note: Staghorns are very slow growing. The brown cluster on the underside of the leaf, which may appear on older plants, is not a disease, but spores, so do not attempt to wipe it off.

Materials for Mounting Staghorn Ferns

- Mounting slab, branch, or other material
- Package strapping, nylon ribbon, old hosiery, etc.
- Sphagnum moss, moistened

- Staple gun
- Fish emulsion fertilizer

PROCEDURE

1. Choose a suitable base for your mounting. Many growers use a wooden slab or plaque. Others use a branch or driftwood.
2. Get some packaging strips, nylon ribbon, old hosiery, or similar narrow strapping material for securing the base to the new mounting material. The amount of material will depend on the size of your staghorn fern and the size of your mounting piece.
3. Moisten enough sphagnum moss to cover the roots of your fern, once it has been removed from its previous container or mounting. The moss should be soaked until completely wet and squeezed out until no water drips.
4. Making sure that your staghorn fern is well watered. Remove its original container or mounting and wrap the moistened sphagnum moss around the root system.
5. Place your entire fern plant onto its new mount and position it so that it is pleasing, while being oriented in the same general position as it grew before.
6. Cut two lengths of strapping material that extend from one side of the root system to the other, passing over fertile shield leaf in criss-cross fashion. It will not hurt the plant if the strapping covers a portion of this shield — this will be less damaging than trying to thread it beneath the shield. A new shield will develop rapidly, covering the strapping.
7. Secure the ends of the strapping material to the new mounting by stapling. A couple of staples on each end should be sufficient. Be sure you have secured the plant tightly to its base, so that it does not sway or jerk when moved.
8. Once the fern is secured to its new mount, submerge the entire unit into a diluted fish emulsion fertilizer solution and soak for about 15 minutes. Remove your plant, allow it to drain, and place it in medium indirect light or dappled shade, such as the shade beneath a tree.

There are alternative methods for growing and mounting staghorn ferns. Consult an Heirloom Gardens Texas Certified Nursery Professional for further recommendations.