

maidenhair fern



Photo courtesy of The John Henry Company

ADIANTUM RADDIANUM
'PACIFIC MAID' DELTA MAIDENHAIR

BOTANICAL NAME

Adiantum spp.
(a-dee-AN-tum)

COMMON NAMES

Maidenhair fern, Maidenhair

DESCRIPTION

Most maidenhair ferns are distinguished by their billowy fronds of delicate, green leaves shaped like miniature fans on thin black, hairlike stalks that connect to smooth, black main stalks. Some species lack individual stalks and have larger, more oblong or triangular leaves.

DECORATIVE LIFE

As potted plants, maidenhair ferns can live for years with the proper care. Maidenhair ferns also are used as landscape plants in mild, humid climates. The delicate fronds are popular as a cut foliage in floral design, in which case the average vase life is three to seven days.

AVAILABILITY

These ferns are available year-round.



Photo courtesy of Casa Flora, Inc.

A. PEDATUM
AMERICAN MAIDENHAIR
FIVE-FINGER FERN

in-store and consumer care

WATER The soil should not be allowed to dry out. Water thoroughly from spring through fall and less during the winter.

LIGHT Bright, indirect light is best.

TEMPERATURE Average room temperature, from 60 F to 75 F, is best. Avoid temperatures below 55 F.

HUMIDITY High humidity, rarely drop-



Photo courtesy of The John Henry Company

A. RADDIANUM 'FRITZ LUTH'
DELTA MAIDENHAIR

ping below 50 percent, is ideal for maidenhair ferns. Frequent misting is suggested. Bathrooms can provide a suitably moist environment, and terrariums are another good option.

Other ways to increase humidity are to use a pebble tray or to display plants in pot groups, where the plants stand close together and the air trapped between them will hold more humidity.

FERTILIZER Feed maidenhair ferns from midspring through summer with houseplant fertilizer, at half strength.

PROPAGATION Maidenhair ferns can be propagated by dividing the plants after they have produced rhizomes (typically in early spring).

PESTS AND PROBLEMS Scale insects, mealybugs and spider mites are potential pests. Pesticides are not recommended because they can damage fern leaves. Clip off badly infested fronds, and, for mites or mealybugs, clean the plant thoroughly with a cotton swab or in the shower twice a week for two weeks. For scale, after clipping off major infestations, use tweezers to remove individual scales.

PRUNING Prune away any dead or yellowing fronds to encourage new growth.

LEAF PROBLEMS Overwatering will cause leaves to turn yellow; underwatering will cause fronds to droop and wilt. Brown leaves are a sign that the humidity is too

fun facts

FAMILY *Adiantums* are members of the *Adiantaceae* family. Common relatives include staghorn (*Platycerium*), brake (*Pteris*) and sword (*Nephrolepis*) ferns as well as spleenwort (*Asplenium*).

HOME SWEET HOME The genus *Adiantum* comprises more than 200 species, which are found in all but very cold regions of the world. Most *Adiantums* are native to the American tropics.

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus *Adiantum* is from the Greek word "adiantos," which means unwetted. These ferns are aptly named because the leaflets repel water; when their fronds are plunged into water, they emerge dry.

GIVE THEM A BREAK Tobacco smoke and other chemical air pollutants can harm ferns, so keep their air clean.

MEDICINAL FAME Herbalists have long regarded maidenhair ferns as having medicinal qualities, including the incorrect belief, perhaps from the name, that they would prevent hair loss. Today teas or syrups made from the plants are used to treat ailments including bronchitis, congestion and sore throats.

low although fronds also naturally turn brown as they age and should be clipped from the plant. Brown patches on fern leaves mean the plant is too cold and wet.

Some information provided by:
Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
The Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifenet.com
The Complete Guide to Conservatory Plants by Ann Bonar
The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual by Barbara Pleasant
Dictionary of Plant Names, by Allen J. Coombes
The House Plant Expert by Dr. D.G. Hessayon
Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names, by William T. Stearn

Reach Foliage Plant of the Month writer Amy Bauer at abauer@superfloralretailing.com or (800) 355-8086.

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