

# Tree Ferns

*Dicksonia antarctica*



## Care & Advice Sheet

**No. 29**

If you require any further information, please ask our outdoor plant advisors who will be very happy to help.

### Opening Times

Monday – Saturday: 9am – 6pm

Sunday: 9.30am – 4pm

### Chessington Garden Centre

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Please recycle me once you've finished reading.

Tree ferns are stunning architectural plants with lush green fronds that spread out gracefully from a thick trunk. Native to the temperate rain forests of Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania their origins date back to prehistoric times.

Tree ferns are hardy in the UK and can adapt to most situations from Cornwall to the Scottish Highlands.

They are very slow growing, increasing by only 2.5cm a year. So, if you are looking for instant impact you will need to select one with a length of trunk that suits your design.

In natural conditions, the fern's trunk height increases by 30cm (1ft) every 10 years until mature, and can eventually reach 10m (36ft).

## Location

The Tree Fern is best suited to a sheltered environment away from strong winds. They thrive in damp conditions in partial to full shade, However, they can be grown in a sunny position provided that they are adequately watered.

## Planting

The tree fern is unique, in that it does not produce true roots. The trunk is simply the remains of previous growth and it provides a dense support for the growing top

They are ideally suited to containers or can be grown in any garden soil. They can be dug up and moved so don't forget that if you move house you can take your Tree Fern with you!

Before planting a frondless trunk soak it thoroughly and then water every day for the first 10 days until the fronds begin to emerge. Plant vertically and firm well in.

If planting a containerised fern that is in leaf make sure that the top of the soil or compost is at the same level as it was in the container.



## Watering and Feeding

Tree ferns receive most of their moisture and nutrient requirements from rainfall.

They should be watered frequently in dry weather to make sure that the crown is kept moist.

**Water the crown** as they do not take up water from the ground and spray the trunk to keep it moist.

After the first year feed with a very dilute liquid feed (e.g. Miracle Grow at 10% usual strength) or use a

specialist high nitrogen feed. Use once a month when the fern is in active growth.

## Winter Care

Although hardy in the UK they will suffer damage by frost in all but the most sheltered gardens. In mild areas the best course of action is to protect the crown in October / November just as winter arrives.

Push a couple of handfuls of straw gently into the crown. In colder areas or if a hard winter is forecast tie the fronds together so that they are upright and pack with straw. Wrap these and the trunk with a double layer of fleece, bubble wrap or hessian filled with straw and secure with string.

Smaller plants and those in containers can be brought into a garage or cold greenhouse to protect them from hard frosts.

It is best to remove any fronds damaged or "browned" by severe frost or wind once the cold weather has passed. These will quickly be replaced by delicate new fronds.

