The King Male Fern

Dryopteris affinis 'The King'



The King Male Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 4 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: syn. Dryopteris cristata

Description:

Graceful, arching fronds with curiously twisted foliage, each leaflet divided at the tips; attractive fiddleheads unfurl in spring; keep evenly moist, provides habitat and shelter for birds and bees

Ornamental Features

The King Male Fern is primarily valued in the landscape or garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its twisted ferny compound leaves remain green in color throughout the year.

Landscape Attributes

The King Male Fern is an herbaceous evergreen 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 should be cut back in late fall in preparation for winter. 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.

The King Male Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

The King Male Fern will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 3 feet. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round. As this plant tends to go dormant in summer, it is best interplanted with late-season bloomers to hide the dying foliage.

This plant does best in a location that gets morning sunlight but is shaded from the hot afternoon sun, although it will also grow in full shade. Keep it away from hot, dry locations that receive direct afternoon sun or which get reflected sunlight, such as against the south side of a white wall. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is particular about its soil conditions, with a strong preference for rich, acidic soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone over the growing season to conserve soil moisture. This is a selected variety of a species 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; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.