Southern Maidenhair Fern

Adiantum capillus-veneris



Southern Maidenhair Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 18 inches

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 7

Other Names: Black Maidenhair Fern, Venus Hair Fern

Description:

This variety is one of the most beautiful of our native ferns; bright green fronds open atop contrasting black stems, becoming horizontal and layered; a lovely addition to the shade garden; tolerates deep shade

Ornamental Features

Southern Maidenhair Fern is primarily valued in the garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its fan-shaped compound leaves are light green in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns a gorgeous gold in the fall. The black stems are very colorful and add to the overall interest of the plant.



Southern Maidenhair Fern
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Southern Maidenhair Fern is an 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.

Southern Maidenhair Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Groundcover
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Southern Maidenhair Fern will grow to be about 18 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 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 full shade. Keep it well 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 moist to wet soil, and will even tolerate some standing water. 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, alkaline soils. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments, 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 native to parts of 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.