Australian Tree Fern

Sphaeropteris cooperi



Australian Tree Fern
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 20 feet

Spread: 12 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 8

Other Names: Lacy Tree Fern, Scaly Tree Fern

Description:

This fast growing variety produces finely divided, lacy fronds that rise out of the trunk and arch down as they mature; fuzzy brown and white scales cover the trunk and leaf stems; prefers bright shade; a stunning accent or container plant

Ornamental Features

Australian Tree Fern has attractive green evergreen foliage which emerges chartreuse in spring on a tree with an arching habit of growth. The large ferny bipinnately compound leaves are highly ornamental and remain green throughout the winter. The rough brown bark adds an interesting dimension to the landscape.



Australian Tree Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Australian Tree Fern is an open evergreen tree with a strong central leader and a shapely form and gracefully arching branches. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.

This tree will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and should not require much pruning, except when necessary, such as to remove dieback. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Australian Tree Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Australian Tree Fern will grow to be about 20 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 12 feet. It has a high canopy of foliage that sits well above the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. As it matures, the lower branches of this tree can be strategically removed to create a high enough canopy to support unobstructed human traffic underneath. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years.

This tree does best in full sun to partial shade. It does best in average to evenly moist conditions, but will not tolerate standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in both summer and winter to conserve soil moisture and protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is not originally from North America.

Australian Tree Fern is a fine choice for the yard, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.