# Southern Shield Fern

***Thelypteris kunthii***



*Southern Shield Fern*
*Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder*

Height: 3 feet

Spread: 20 inches

Spacing: 12 inches

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 6

Other Names: Kunth's Maiden Fern, Wood Fern, River Fern

**Description:**

A gracefully arching native fern that naturalizes well in wet or boggy areas, and can be used in a garden setting as long as the soil is moist; adds beautiful texture to a shade garden; spreads by rhizomes and often grows into large colonies



*Southern Shield Fern foliage*
*Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder*

**Ornamental Features**

Southern Shield Fern is primarily valued in the garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its ferny pinnately compound leaves are forest green in color. The foliage often turns harvest gold in fall.

**Landscape Attributes**

Southern Shield 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 plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and should be cut back in late fall in preparation for winter. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spreading

Southern Shield Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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

**Planting & Growing**

Southern Shield Fern will grow to be about 3 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 20 inches. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 12 inches apart. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 8 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 is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some 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. This species is native to parts of North America. It can be propagated by division.

Southern Shield Fern is a fine choice for the garden, 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 growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.