The King Ostrich Fern

Matteuccia 'The King'



The King Ostrich Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 6 feet

Spread: 4 feet

Spacing: 3 feet

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 2

Description:

Add to the garden for amazing texture; its huge plume-like fronds make a bold statement, this is a very tough and hardy plant; spreads aggressively and may require some control; grows best in shade and rich, moist soil

Ornamental Features

The King Ostrich Fern is primarily valued in the landscape or garden for its ornamental upright and spreading habit of growth. Its attractive fragrant ferny compound leaves remain light green in color throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

The King Ostrich Fern is an herbaceous fern with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a high maintenance plant that will require regular care and upkeep, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. 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 Ostrich Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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

Planting & Growing

The King Ostrich Fern will grow to be about 6 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 feet. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 3 feet apart. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 20 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 an amazingly adaptable plant, tolerating both dry conditions and even 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 highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This particular variety is an interspecific hybrid. 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.

The King Ostrich Fern is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use 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.