



July 2005

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<http://www.rwsarchitects.com/fern.htm>

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, July 17 at 2:00 p. m. – Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77044 – Phone: (713) 529-3960**

**A message from our President:**

Hi Everyone,

I'm sorry I had to miss last month's meeting. From all reports I have gotten it's obvious that Larry Rucker did a wonderful job leading the "hands-on" activity of planting fern plugs in wire baskets. Has anyone other than Larry or Ted Richardson learned how to spell or pronounce the fern name? If so, let me know! Thanks, Larry!

Is it only me or do you all think this is the hottest summer we've experienced? Perhaps you noticed the Q and A in Kathy Huber's Houston Chronicle column last Sunday regarding the brown fronds on a reader's Australian Tree Fern. It can also be commented that while hot, we have been experiencing very low humidity to the detriment of most ferns. Another point about tree ferns is that one must be careful to not become overzealous in this climate and water their "crown" which can cause rot.

We've had a change of venue for our August Social. To give Ted Richardson a little more recuperating time from his hip surgery, Malcolm McCorquodale will host the August party instead of the Christmas party. He lives "inside-the-loop", just east of the Galleria. Complete directions and a map will be included in next month's *Newsletter*.

I was sorry to hear of the passing of Patsy Geiger's father last month. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to her but look forward to seeing her often again.

Our speaker for July is Larry Weed – more about him later in this *Newsletter*. I've known Larry for a long time and I know he will give a presentation you all will enjoy. He will be bringing some of his plants and I know you will want to purchase some of them when you see them.

See ya' Sunday.

Darla



Members: - Spread the word – encourage someone you know to visit us - we always have room for more!

**Membership dues:**

Individual:	\$10.00
Family:	\$15.00
Student:	\$5.00

**Officers and Committees:**

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Martha Burg
Secretary:	Patsy Geiger
Treasurer:	Al and Susan Peacock
Board Members at Large:	Ted Richardson, Cecil Strange, Jr. and Larry Rucker
Membership Chair:	Cecil Strange, Jr.
Newsletter:	Paul Geiger
Library:	Patrick Hudnall
Raffles:	Jean Keiser
Hospitality:	Lulu Mae Leonard
Welcoming at Door:	Emma Lee Payne



**Minutes of Meeting  
June 19, 2005**

A regular monthly meeting of the TEXAS GULF COAST FERN SOCIETY was held at 2:00 p.m., June 19, 2005 at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Dr., Houston, TX 77044.

Larry Rucker opened the meeting and led a fun-filled "hands-on" activity of planting plugs of "Gonioplebium subauriculatum" (?) in wire baskets of choice; i.e., round or half-round.

Refreshments were provided by Martha Burg.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. and most attendees remained to enjoy the delicious refreshments and the fellowship of cleaning up (a lot of) potting soil and sphagnum moss.



**July Refreshments:**

Refreshments for our next meeting will be furnished by Patsy and Paul Geiger. Come out and enjoy some really good and delicious food!



**Library**

Don't forget the great resource of information available in our library. At each meeting there are take-home sheets that contain a brief review of available books. Also at each meeting is a wide variety of books available for immediate checkout.



### Our Next Meeting – July 17:

As mentioned earlier by Darla, our speaker for July 17<sup>th</sup> is Larry Weed. After serving 11 years in the US Army Airborne, Larry completed degree work at the University of Alabama and was graduated in 1969. He worked as a structural engineer for the US Army Corps of Engineers until his retirement in 1989. He lives in New Orleans, LA with his wife, Glenda.

The Weed's interest in gardening began with the purchase of their home in 1972 and the need to decorate a bare patio. Glenda says that at first they purchased any kind of plant they liked, but soon had to limit the varieties. They especially love ferns and have made them the largest portion of their collection of plants. They have a large variety of rare plants and spend a lot of their time collecting them and visiting other people's collections.

Glenda Weed reports that Larry is the expert "grower" and she is only a helper. She will help him carry in many different ferns for our enjoyment. This will be a good chance for us to see and purchase some unusual and rare ferns.

The meeting promises to be very informative and entertaining so come out and **BRING A FRIEND.**



Are you thinking about repotting some of your ferns? The following is a reprint of an article that appeared in the April 2004 issue of Tampa Bay Fern Club *Forum for Fern Fanciers* and could be topical.

The best time to repot is after a period of dormancy. For most ferns the optimum time for repotting is during spring and early summer while there is still ample growing time ahead for them to become re-established in the container. It is a good idea to soak your fern 12 to 24 hours before repotting (soak in a bucket if necessary). Gently remove the fern from the container; if it is a large epiphyte in a basket, the basket may need to be cut away with wire cutters. Tease the edges of the root ball to remove old or dead roots and up to one third of the old potting mix. In particular, remove all of the surface soil as this is probably compacted. In the base of the new container cover the drainage hole with gauze to prevent the entry of worms and place crocks at the bottom to ensure good drainage. Place the fern in the new container and fill with potting mix.

If growth is stunted because of the exhaustion of nutrient reserves in the potting mix, either the plant must be fertilized or repotted. If the pot has become so full of roots that they are a solid mass and are also protruding from the drainage holes, the fern needs repotting or dividing. If the potting mix is soggy and or smelling sour and the roots are poorly developed with the mix falling away from them, such ferns need repotting with fresh mix in the same size or even smaller container. The cause of a soggy potting mix is excess water and insufficient aeration. The cause may be worms, over watering, too much fine material in the potting mix, or the breakdown of materials in the mix resulting in the formation of fine, clogging debris.

Epiphytic ferns can be difficult to repot so if a plant is healthy delay repotting for as long as possible and maintain growth by the application of liquid or slow release fertilizers. If the fern dies out in the center, the old potting mix can be scooped out in this area and replenished with fresh material. If the entire plant needs to be repotted it may be necessary to cut the old container away.

Because of the difficulty of obtaining good quality loam and because of disease problems associated with soils, we prefer to use a soil-less potting mix such as Fafard or Pro-Mix and amend it. Some of the

amendments that may be added depending on the type of fern are: sand (a coarse grade which can be referred to as gravel is best), perlite, pumice, oyster grit, sponge rock, and lava rock. They all aid in aeration. Some other materials that can be incorporated in your mix are pine and fir bark, tree fern fiber, coffee grindings (they have good physical properties and a high level of nitrogen.), and Sphagnum peat moss. Sphagnum peat moss and tree fern fiber are also used in epiphytic mixtures. Sphagnum has a tremendous water holding capacity while still having good aeration. Though low in nutrients it has the ability to hold added nutrients in a form available for fern growth. When dry it is difficult to wet and only moist to wet samples should be used in potting mixes. Tree fern fiber is an excellent additive to potting mixes. The long fibers provide good aeration and have some water holding capacity. If potting lime loving ferns, be sure to add some dolomite limestone to your mix.

The roots of epiphytic or lithophytes ferns are specialized and like access to adequate supplies of oxygen and air movement. Epiphytic ferns generally grow very well in soil-less potting mixtures because of the improved aeration and drainage of these media. Not all materials used in soil-less potting mixes are suitable for these ferns. Because epiphytic ferns need aeration around their roots, it is necessary to use a coarser mixture than normally used in rooting mixes. As a general rule the larger growing and coarser the epiphytic fern the coarser the chunks used in its potting mixture. Other materials that may be used with epiphytic ferns are coarse sand, gravels, grit, tree fern fiber, osmunda fiber, charcoal, sphagnum peat moss, leaf mould, and pine, redwood, or fir bark.

There are a variety of choices for baskets as well as ferns to put in them. There are the weeping types (*Adiantums*), resetting types (*Aspleniums*), arching frond type (*Nephrolepis*, *Asplenium bulbiferum*), and those with a creeping growth habit (*Pyrrhosia* and other polypodies). Baskets can be plastic, wire, wooden slatted, or made of tree fern trunk. If using wire or wooden slatted baskets you must line them with sphagnum moss, Melaleuca bark, Coconut fiber, or Chinese fan palm fiber. *Davallias* and

polypodies generally grow well in slatted wooden baskets lined with sphagnum moss. Large slabs of cork bark can be hung horizontally or molded into a container for epiphytic ferns. Those with a creeping rhizome love creeping over the surface of treefern baskets and establishing themselves between the fibers. Established baskets of creeping ferns usually die off and begin to look tatty in the center while the outside is still fresh and vigorous, the center part can be rejuvenated by cutting out the potting mix including the dead part of the roots and rhizomes of the fern and replacing it with fresh potting mix. After a short period new rhizomes of the fern will creep into the mix and fill in the gap.

Some epiphytic ferns adjust well to growing on a slab (*Drynaria*, *Platynerium*). They prefer this situation where some or all of their roots are exposed to the atmosphere, rather than in a container where all of their roots are buried. Suitable materials for slabs include tree fern, weathered hardwood, corkbark, and compressed cork. Treefern slabs should be oriented so that the fibers run vertically and catch water rather than shedding it. Hardwood slabs are suitable for *Platyneriums* and other large epiphytes such as *Aglaomorpha* and *Drynaria*. Keep in mind if you attach an epiphytic fern such as a *Platynerium* to note the most common direction of the prevailing rain and to observe the selected trunks during periods of rain. Attaching epiphytic ferns to the side sheltered from most of the rain will lead to their death. Be sure to water attached ferns during dry periods until they are well established.