



March 2023

Vol. 25 No. 3

<http://www.tgcfernsoc.org>

Our meeting this month will be “blended” by meeting in-person at the Judson Robinson, Jr. Community Center (2020 Hermann Dr., Houston, 77004 and/or via *GoToMeeting* – member’s choice.

TGCFS MISSION STATEMENT

Organized in 1998 by a group of fern enthusiasts (a.k.a. fern lovers, fernies, pteridologists), to cultivate, foster and promote interest in ferns and fern allies, the TGC Fern Society presents educational programs including “how to” sessions, presentations by local, national and internationally known fern experts, and field trips and tours-thus providing a forum for fern enthusiasts to visit, learn, share plants, ideas, information, and have a good time. A very informative monthly newsletter is published for members, and special events include presentations to other groups, fundraiser events, and a year-end holiday season party. **Regular meetings are held at 2:00 P.M. on the third Sunday of each month at the Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Herman Drive, Houston, TX, 77004. Phone (713) 284-1994.**

A message from our President:

Hi Everyone!

What a great meeting! We are starting to get our people back to attending in person and it was so good to see everyone’s smiling faces and the laughter from just having a good time. We also had a new member present at the meeting Chris Goodgame and we want to welcome him to our Society! Patrick Hudnall’s talk on tree ferns was very helpful and taught us all that some of these majestic beauties can be grown in the Greater Houston area. The PowerPoint presentation was great and the examples that were brought in were nice size specimens. Larger would have been a challenge to bring into the meeting. The Australian Tree fern is the most commonly grown in our area, and 1 gal potted plants were available for anyone that wanted to try them after they heard the talk. Several decided to give them a try, I’m glad to say. Please see the minutes for more information on what Patrick talked about.

This month would normally be our field trip, but it was decided to switch the field trip to May. We are looking at suggestions on a place to meet and see ferns. Every other year we do a field trip that is an easier-walking style trip so more people should be able to attend. That will happen this May. So this month we will be having a meeting on Maidenhair ferns and will be presented by me, Darla Harris.

There are so many lovely varieties of maidenhair that grow well here in Houston. I will go over some of the do’s and don’ts of growing them in the ground as well as pots. I always get asked if they will grow indoors and if so how. I will be giving you my take on how to achieve this. This will be a short PowerPoint presentation and a mostly show-and-tell type presentation. I hope you can make it. There will be a selection of maidenhair at the meeting for anyone that

wants to try out some of these awesome plants including the Texas native, southern maidenhair.

More things in March: we will have a membership table set up at the John Fairy Gardens ‘Budding Out Event’ They are the gardens to visit (when you are not helping with the membership table). There will also be a bunch of different vendors - plant vendors as well as other products. This is on 18th of March the day before the Fern Society Meeting on Sunday the 19th. The following week is March Mart at Mercer Botanical Garden and that is Friday and Saturday the 24th and 25th. We will have a membership table there as well, and need some additional help signing up new members that have a strong interest in learning more about ferns. If we have multiple members helping with the table everyone can get a chance to break away and shop!

April’s meeting will be on Staghorn Ferns, this will be given virtually by a grower in Florida, Justin Miller. He has travelled the world and has a very broad knowledge of plants, animals, and microorganisms. He has a large collection of the *Platynerium* species, cultivars and hybrids including his own attempts at hybridizing by crossing spores of select ferns. He will be able to answer those nagging questions you might have on this topic.

May will be the field trip

June 18th is our summer party. We will be looking for a host to hold the party at their home and show off their plants. This is always a fun event, and it helps everyone to catch up with each other and bond. That has always been what has made our society so popular. So please let Patrick Hudnall or me know if you would like to host for us.

I hope everyone is enjoying the programs and the back-to-basics theme to get us all back on the track of learning and growing ferns. We will be continuing with this all year.

If there is a fern you would like for us to highlight, please let me know.

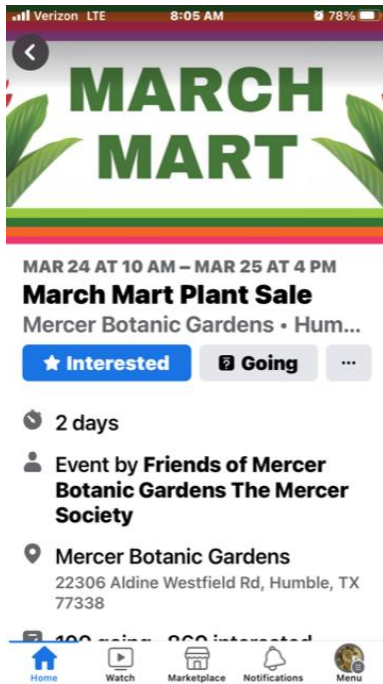
We will be having another door prize this month for those attending in person! You do have to stay until we draw the numbers.

Looking forward to seeing even more of you at our March meeting!!

Take care everyone!

Darla

Please takenote of the upcoming events:



NB: TGCFSmembers should follow the 9am to 4pm time frame.

Dues! Dues! Dues!

Dues are payable for 2023.

Your dues may be paid in person at a meeting or sent by mail to me: Beth Ayer, 5815 Portal Dr., Houston, TX 77096.

Checks should be payable to: **Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society (TGCFS).**

If you have any questions about the status of your dues please contact me at either: beth.ayer@yahoo.com or 713.729.0994 (landline; you may leave a voice mail message) or Alicia Baker – See attached Membership form for further information.

2023 Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Patrick Hudnall
Secretary:	Ceil Dow
Treasurer:	Beth Ayer
Board Members-at-Large:	Ruby Adams Ken Warren
Education Chair:	Darla Harris
Hospitality Chair:	Larry Rucker
Library:	Fred Robinson
Membership Chair:	Alicia Baker
Newsletter:	Paul Geiger
Spore Exchange:	Patrick Hudnall
Ways and Means:	Larry Rucker
Raffle, Store, etc.	Rick Dow
Web Master:	Malcolm McCorquodale
Welcoming at Door:	TBD

Please note a correction to last month’s Treasurer’s report. The corrected numbers are highlighted in red.

Your Newsletter editor was responsible and regrets the error.

4th Quarter 2022 Treasurer’s Report, Corrected

October 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022

Income:

Dues:	\$205.00
Raffle:	\$58.00
Donations:	\$45.00
Interest:	\$2.62

Expenses:

Program Expense	\$1,766.34
Bank Charges	\$32.00
Balance on 12-31-2021:	\$15,798.79
Balance on 12-31-2022:	\$14,691.46

Net gain for 4Q22: -\$1,487.72

Net gain for 2022: -\$1,107.33

Beth Ayer

Minutes of Blended Meeting via “GoToMeeting” and In-person

February 19, 2023

Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

Meeting was held at 2:00pm at the Justin Robinson Community Center in Hermann Park. Members unable to

attend the in-person meeting could still participate through the “GoToMeeting” app.

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 pm by Darla Harris. Approximately 20 members present in person & 4 online.

We welcomed a new member, Chris Goodgame to our collective.

Members are needed to attend the John Fairy Garden plant sale on March 18, from 8am – 4pm. Members are needed to help people interested in joining the TGCFs, fill out membership forms & discuss what meetings entail. A card table is needed. The membership table will be located next to The Fern Plantation sale tent. The trifold TGCFs advertisement flyer is also needed to distribute to interested persons.

Field trip will be postponed until May. It has not been decided where the trip will be located.

FERN OF THE MONTH – Cyrtomium - The Holly Ferns

Cyrtomium is a genus of about 35 species of ferns in the family Dryopteridaceae. Mostly from Asia, and Africa including Madagascar. They are closely related to the genus Polystichum, but the Cyrtomium takes our heat better than the Polystichum does. They are easy to grow and in years that our winters stay in the zone 9 temperature range stay evergreen. During the colder winters they can go dormant and come back up in the spring. Once established they are pretty care free, needing only normal watering when planted in the ground. They can be grown in pots and even hanging baskets for that nice winter evergreen fern that you don’t have to protect. They are a clumping type fern so they do not spread all over, however they do grow easily from spore and can come up in other places in the garden.

Cyrtomium falcatum - The Japanese Holly is hard to find because it had been distributed from tissue culture.

Unfortunately, the parent plant had a fungus so that all of the subsequent ferns were weak & eventually died.

Cyrtomium fortunei var. clivicola – rosette vase shape. They come back even after a hard freeze. Dwarf in height, they can grow to 1-2’ wide and tall. Lighter green in color than most Japanese Hollies.

Cyrtomium falcatum subsp. littorale - Coastal Holly Fern – is a newer variety. It grows to 1’ - 1 ½’ tall. When spore is spread, it can grow into a new plant when it finds the right spot.

Japanese Holly Pests: The microscopic lace bug causes problems. Super easy to treat though, just spray with insecticidal soap and the pests fall right off.

TREE FERNS by Patrick Hudnall

Patrick has been growing tree ferns for a long time. Tree Fern Cultivation is a real success story. They have been around since the Triassic Period. Fossils have been found dating from 240 million years ago. Tree ferns have the largest leaf structure of all the ferns. Fronds are covered

in scales. Fronds are grown from rhizomes and unfurl as they mature.

Two common genus are Cyathea which have more woody trunks and Dicksonia which have a soft tissue trunk. Cyathea are terrestrial, single trunked with massive fibrous roots. Cyathea are found in the tropical rain forests, tropical cloud forests and temperate wood forests with 307 species. Tree ferns are not to be confused with ferns that grow in trees. Some plants look like tree ferns but are not. An example of this is a Jacaranda.

Tree ferns are not a real tree. The main role of the trunk is to raise fronds above the ground. Fronds are held on top of plant. If the crown dies so does the plant. A stipe is where fronds are joined at the top of the plant. A crosier is the name of the unfurled fern frond. All tree ferns reproduce from spores created in the sori. When the spores are released, it looks like dust. Tree ferns must be at least 5 years old to reproduce.

Tree ferns look very tropical and attractive. Irritating fern fibers can get in your eyes or clothes when pruning them.

Cyathea cooperi – Australian Tree Fern is a common tree fern found at nurseries. This plant found in a 5 gallon pot is about \$100. (By comparison, Dicksonia in 1 gallon pots are less expensive and commonly found in garden nurseries.) Rhizomes will develop into the trunk. Trunks can grow several feet tall and as tall as roof high.

Tree ferns prefer subtropical temperatures. They like 80% humidity which is typical in the Houston area. They must be covered in winter or put in a warmed garage with a space heater to keep temperatures above 40 degrees.

Cyathea dregi can take 10 degrees for a brief period.

Dicksonia antarctica is hardy to 20 degrees. Cyathea robusta and Cyathea cooperi are less hardy. Most tree ferns will tolerate mild frost if covered with frost cloth. For an arctic blast, tie up fronds and cover with insulation wrap. Pine straw and leaves can be piled onto the crown to keep it from freezing. If freezing rain is predicted, protect the crown with a cover. Fronds can burn if placed too close to a heat lamp.

Another way to protect Tree Ferns from cold temperatures is to wrap a wire cage around the trunk and pack it with leaves or Styrofoam peanuts. This also works for banana trees. Also, use a heating cable and wrap around the trunk. The large kind of Christmas tree lights wrapped around the trunk and crown is also effective. As a last resort, the plant can be dug up and moved into a warmed garage. Try to get as much root ball as possible. If a lot of roots are lost, may need to trim fronds back. Replant as soon as possible. When checking for frost damage, if the trunk is mushy, it probably froze and will not come back.

When temperatures get over 100 degrees, it can burn the fronds. Temperate Tree Ferns are somewhat more heat

tolerant but like cooler temperatures. Fronds can get sun burned if placed in direct sun.

Tree Ferns prefer acidic soil with plenty of organic material. The green Miracle Gro bag is preferred. Never allow fertilizer to get into the crown. Do not fertilize after mid-September. The plant is getting prepared for winter. Tree Ferns like to be watered daily. They like to be watered well but prefer well-draining soil. All tree fronds will suffer if dried out.

If a Tree Fern is root bound, gently transplant it by untangling the roots, & setting it into a prepared bed or pot. The most wind tolerant Tree Fern is *Cyathea medullaris*. It likes bright shade. The stipe of this plant is sturdier and stockier than most others.

Problems with Tree Ferns: Slime mold or dog vomit fungus looks like scrambled eggs. If it is noticed on your plant, just scrape it off and throw it away. Crown hardening is called Rhizotomia. It looks like the stipe does not unfurl all the way. Provide good air circulation to prevent this. To treat Rhizotomia, spray the crown with a broad systemic fungicide and drench the soil with it.

Cibotium schiedei – gets to 20' tall. Trunks are typically 8' tall.

Dicksonia antarctica – grew on the east side of his house when Patrick lived in Missouri City and it did well there. The *Cyathea* in its native habitat, will grow to reach up through the canopy to get sunlight.

Cyathea brownii grew well in a 20 gallon pot for Patrick but he had to drag it into the garage every winter.

Cyathea tomentosissima is very hairy and full of scales. It feels fuzzy to the touch.

Cyathea cooperi is the most common tree fern in the trade.

Cyathea lunalata is indigenous to Guam. It was almost bombed out of existence in World War 2. Also, it was almost lost because of development. Sori are round.

Questions & Answers

Question: What fertilizer do you use?

Answer: Long release. Dynamite fertilizer has micronutrients in it. It is similar to Nutricote or Osmocote.

Question: What potting mix do you use?

Answer: Start out with the green bag of Miracle Gro potting mix. Do use a quality soil mix. Add perlite. Add milled sphagnum moss which is sold in bales. You can add surface athletics which acts like expanded shale. It absorbs moisture. Patrick also adds red lava rocks which are light and add pea gravel. This slows down the water evaporation and also slows down the snails.

Question: Does a crossier die if damaged?

Answer: The crossiers are the curled tips of the unfurled fern frond. If it is damaged, that fern frond will die.

Respectfully submitted by Ceil Dow.

The American Fern Society (AFS)

The American Fern Society is over 120 years old. With over 900 members worldwide, it is one of the largest international fern clubs in the world. It was established in 1893 with the objective of fostering interest in ferns and fern allies. It exchanges information and specimens between members via their publications and spore exchange.

AFS non-professional membership (\$20) includes access to the Spore Exchange and subscription to the Fiddlehead Forum.

Professional membership (\$40) includes the benefits above plus access to the American Fern Journal.

Please note that donations to the AFS are not tax deductible.

To find out more about the Society and/or join, visit <https://www.amerfernsoc.org/>



Library

Please be reminded about the very nice collection of books in our library. It's easy to borrow a book for your use and home study. Please contact Fred Robinson, our Library Chairperson. And please remember to return the books in a timely manner to allow others equal access.

If you're looking for our book on Tree Ferns, it is still out on loan and will be returned shortly (hopefully!).



February 2023 Door Prize

Ciel Dow was the lucky winner of the hanging basket: *Nephrolepis exalta* "Whitmanii" fern.

Congratulations, Ceil!





Fern of the Month - March 2023

Doryopteris

Submitted by Darla Harris

(Pictures by Darla)

This group is mostly grown for house plants in the US, or at least brought in for winter due to being in a zone 10 or higher. It is grown around the world in the tropical climates of The Americas, southern India, Australia, Africa, Madagascar, Malaysia and several islands throughout the South Pacific.

What makes this group so sought after is the leaves themselves. They are, first of all dimorphic, which means the sterile and fertile leaves or segments look different from each other, giving you two different looking fronds on each plant. Second, they normally have a Maple leaf look. This group often has plantlets forming on the leaves as well that can be prorogated by division as well as by spore.

Doryopteris cordata is called the Antenna Fern. More of a lime green stays small with the sterile fronds only getting an 1-2" or so tall and the fertile fronds reaching about 6-8". Likes to be moist but not wet, does well in a terrarium or a succulent bowl. Grows well potted indoors with very thick leaves so can take the lower humidity of our homes. Normal potting mix works fine and bright filtered light for this easy to grow plant. The following four pictures are good illustrations:



Doryopteris nobilis know as the Arrowhead Fern. This is a cluming type fern that gets up to 2' tall. With two notably different fronds that form plantlets at the apex of the leaf. This is a great house plant with its deep green leaf color and the different shape leaves with babies forming on them. A real conversation starter. Can be grown potted outdoors as well until the weather gets below 50 degrees. Normal potting soil that is kept moist but not over watered.



Two other notable Doryopteris, but less common in the trade, is *D. pedate* and small growing fern and *D. ludans* with looks like a slightly smaller version of *D. nobilis*.

On a personal note: I have had both *D. cordata* and *D. nobilis* down to mid 30's with frost protected and they have not shown any damage. I would not let them freeze. They are a slow grower during the winter season, so slow down the water some then, but during their active growing can take a bit more water on our hot summer days. I will have a few of these available sale at the meeting if you would like to add these to your collection

Doryopteris nobilis know as the Arrowhead Fern. Is a clumping type fern that gets up to 2' tall. With two notably different fronds with plantlets that form on the top of the leaf where the stem come into the leaf. A great house plant with its deep green leaves and different shapes, but can be grown out door until the weather gets below 50 degrees. Normal potting mix and moist but not over watered.

These two are the ones in the trade the most. There are two more you can find from time to time the *D. pedate* and *D. ludans*. Excellent to look for and add to your collection.