

An introduction to Ferns



Magic
5

the
species
recovery
trust

Buckler Ferns (Dryopteridaceae)

11 species in UK
~570 species globally

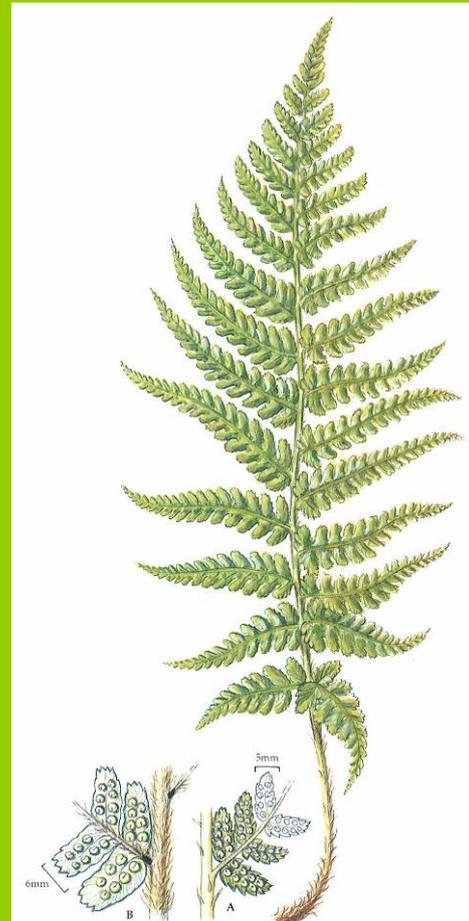
Key characteristics

- Feathery divided leaves
- Scaly leaf stalks
- Arise from central axis in clump
- Often retain dead leaves into next season
- Kidney shaped spore cases



Broad Buckler Fern

Male Fern



Uses

- Garden ornamentals
- Medicinal use – rhizomes by Zulu and Sesotho people
- Floristry

Master your Buckler Ferns with the Magic 5!

INTERMEDIATE

- Male Fern
 - Scaly Male Fern
 - Wood Sedge
 - Broad Buckler Fern
-

ADVANCED

- Oak Fern
 - Crested Buckler Fern
 - Narrow Buckler Fern
-

TWITCHER

- Limestone Fern
- Hay-scented Buckler Fern
- Northern Buckler Fern
- Mountain Buckler Fern

Shield Ferns (Polystichum)

3 species in UK
~250 species globally

Key characteristics

- Large perennial ferns
- Sharp bristle points on the teeth of their leaflets
- Round-shaped spore cases
- Scaly leaf stalks
- Arise from central axis in clump
- Often retain dead leaves into next season



Hard Shield-fern



Soft Shield Fern

How to ID

- Soft Shield Fern – soft to touch, leaf angles wider than right angle where they touch stalk
- Hard Shield Fern - rough to touch – leaf angles narrower than right angle
- Holly Fern – rigid, glossy with spines

Master your Shield Ferns with the Magic 5!

INTERMEDIATE

Soft Shield Fern

Hard Shield Fern

Holly Fern

Help!

Soft Shield Fern

Soft bright green fronds

Densely hairy

Lowest pinnules with large thumb forming almost a right angle

Hard Shield Fern

Stiffer fronds , glossy without hairs

Lowest pinnules with smaller thumb forming an acute angle

Holly Fern

Very rigid with spine tips to pinnae

Spleenworts (Aspleniaceae)

10 species in UK
~700 species globally

Key characteristics

- Mostly small ferns
- Often grow in walls or trees
- Linear spore cases



Maidenhair Spleenwort



Hart's-tongue

Key species

- Maidenhair Spleenwort – small, on walls with black stalks with rows of small leaflets
- Wall Rue – Small tufted and evergreen. Diamond shaped leaved on branched stalks
- Black Spleenwort – Larger version of above, with twice divided stalks
- Hart's-tongue – Evergreen, completely undivided leaves, often on wood banks

Master your Spleenworts with the Magic 5!

INTERMEDIATE

- Maidenhair Spleenwort
 - Wall Rue
 - Hart's-tongue
 - Rusty-back
 - Green Spleenwort
-

ADVANCED

- Brittle Bladder-fern
 - Sea Spleenwort
 - Black Spleenwort
-

TWITCHER

- Dickie's Fern
- Mountain Bladder-fern
- Oblong Woodsia
- Lanceolate Spleenwort
- Forked Spleenwort

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*)

10 species in UK
~700 species globally

Key characteristics

- Commonest and most widespread fern in the world
- Single fronds emerge from underground rhizomes
- Unpleasantly aromatic
- Triangular shaped fronds
- Spore cases develop underneath margins of leaflets



Key features

- Often the dominant vegetation on heaths, moorland, open woods and neglected pastures, especially on acid soils.

Horsetails (Equisetum)

~12 species in UK
~4,500 species globally

Key characteristics

- Erect, with rough feel
- Ribbed, 'silicified' stems that are hollow except at the jointed nodes
- Black sheaths at junctions, often toothed
- Range from very branched to simple fat spikes
- Living fossil, dominated the earth in the late Palaeozoic



Water Horsetail



Uses

- Food – strobili eaten in Japan (with considerable preparation)
- Gold prospecting – often grow on soils with gold content
- Cleaning – iron pans and wooden tools, due to abrasive feel
- World economy – are significant constituent of oil and coal

Master your Horsetails with the Magic 5!

INTERMEDIATE

- Field Horsetail
 - Water Horsetail
 - Wood Horsetail
 - Great Horsetail
 - Horsetail
-

ADVANCED

- Marsh Horsetail
 - Shade Horsetail
-

TWITCHER

- Rough Horsetail
- Boston Horsetail
- Moore's Horsetail

Magic 5 aims gently to introduce people to the magical and diverse world of the UK flora, simplifying, but at the same time inspiring a growing knowledge of our wild plant heritage.

There are over 5,000 species of flowering plants, ferns, bryophytes and lichens in the UK, which can be fairly intimidating. This course breaks down that flora into several bite-size chunks, and while it won't teach you every species, it will highlight important groups and allow you confidently to identify some commonly encountered flowering plant families based on several key features.

Other courses will introduce similar bite size chunks of the remaining four parts of the plant kingdom –opening people's eyes and imagination to the exciting, diverse yet often overlooked world of lichens, bryophytes, ferns and grasses whilst giving an overview of the whole of the UK flora.

1. Lichens
2. Bryophytes
3. Ferns
4. Grasses
5. Flowers

The Species Recovery Trust

is a charity dedicated to saving some of the rarest species in the UK, and educating and enthusing the public about wildlife around them.

More details of our work, our training courses and how you can support us can be found at;

www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk