

# Native Plant of the Month



## Landscape Value

Most Seattle urban gardeners will likely scoff at any suggestion that bracken fern fits under this heading. Its underground rhizomes are deep and persistent and very difficult to eradicate from where it is not welcome, making it a bane for many.

However, "if you can't beat them, join them" may apply with this important native species, and one might consider letting this plant find a spot to thrive in the naturalized landscape, along with its close ally, horsetail. It creates a mass of tropical-sized leaves, turns golden-brown in winter and is a food source for many native animal species. Allow it to grow in back lots, wet corners, and in the forest understory.

## Bracken Fern

*Pteridium aquilinum*

- This plant grows throughout the northern temperate zone and is considered the world's most widespread fern.
- The early shoots in spring are browsed heavily by deer, elk, bears, and other animals.
- A colonizing plant, bracken ferns help land to recover after burns, logging, and floods, and play an important role in restoration.