

Native Plant of the Month



Deer fern with two types of fronds.

Fertile fronds with spores.

Evergreen, sterile leaves.

Fiddleheads in spring.

Landscape Value

Deer fern is an excellent native plant to include in landscapes. Its evergreen nature and low compact form with feathery fronds, make it a specimen fern to include in shaded areas. The new red fiddleheads add seasonal interest in spring.

It thrives in partial to deep shade and once established will tolerate the dry conditions that are present under the forest canopy.

Plant *en masse* or mix with other groundcovers. Deer fern naturally occurs with woodland plants such as bleeding heart, false lily-of-the-valley, starflower, Solomon's seal, trillium, foamflower, piggyback, fringe cup, dewberry, Siberian miner's-lettuce, and many others.

Deer Fern

Blechnum spicant

- Deer and elk rub their sore antler stubs on these fern clumps after their antlers drop in the fall, which helps with healing. They also browse on the foliage during the winter and early spring. These observations provide likely reasons for its common name.
- This fern has two types of fronds: one (that produces spores) is feathery, upright, deciduous and fertile. The other is evergreen, lays flat, and is the primary food producer for the plant.
- This plant has historical uses as an edible and medicinal plant by native people.