

Growing and caring for Polypodiums

There is a large family of Polypodium ferns with a wide variety of form and shape. Many Polypodiums are easy to grow and are ideal for pot or basket culture; some grow well in the ground. Some of the Gonophlebium species with their long weeping fronds are very prized and make spectacular displays.

Common name Kangaroo, Green Caterpillar, Tongue

Cultivation In nature Polypodiums occupy a great range of habitats – from dry regions to tropical rainforests. They can be epiphytes (growing on hosts) or lithophytes (growing on rocks) or terrestrial (growing in the ground).

In cultivation Polypodiums generally grow well in shadehouses under 70% shadecloth in pots and baskets; some can grow successfully on tree fern logs; some do well in the ground in a shaded protected area. They require filtered light. Many are hardy and are cold tolerant but the tropical species need protection from direct sunlight and winter weather.

Potting Mix Polypodiums in pots and baskets need an open coarse mixture of 50% good quality potting mix and 50% orchid mix with added materials such as cow manure, peatmoss, charcoal or perlite to help drainage and aeration around the roots.

Watering Polypodiums like plenty of water during the active growing period, spring to summer. In winter when growth slows down or ceases, they are best kept on the drier side.

Fertilisation Polypodiums in pots/baskets respond to slow release fertilizers and manures added to the mix; occasional liquid fertilizers such as seaweed extracts or fish emulsions at half strength are helpful. For polypodiums on the ground, blood and bone or animal manures or liquid fertilizers can be beneficial in the growing season.

Some hardy Polypodiums to grow

Microsorium diversifolium - pots/baskets/ground

Phlebodium aureum - pots/baskets/ground

Polypodium vulgare - baskets

Polypodium formosanum - baskets

Pyrrosia lingua - baskets/logs

Reproduced with kind permission from
the [Fern Society of South Australia](#)