



A Tale Of Two Oak-ish Plants

These are some of the best of what oaks have to offer but not oaks at all. These are the winged (-opteris) daughters of Zeus (Drus, Greek for 'oak;' ergo Druid) rising each Spring from the decaying litter of ancient oaks.



We know these plants better as *Dryopteris erythrosora* (meaning 'red' for Autumn Fern) and *Dryopteris filix-mas*



(meaning 'blessed or fertile male') for Male Fern. This explains the Druid fascination with practicing their rites under or in the branches of giant oaks.

Their name dictates the type of habitat in which ferns, in general, thrive. Shade, moisture, and lots of organic matter in varying degrees of decay make the perfect home for any genus of fern.

The Genus *Dryopteris* offers many other species and their variants that make occasional appearances at CPC: Marginal Fern (*D. marginalis*), Scaly Male Fern (*D. affinis*), Crested Wood Fern (*D. cristata*), and Many-fingered Male Fern (*D. filix-mas* 'linearis polydactyla') - to name a few.

It never ceases to amaze me how the very names of our plants not only describe the plant but even let us know where and how to best plant them!



Jeff Good

Christensen's Plant Center
6282 Gotfredson Road
Plymouth, Michigan 48170

(734) 454-1400 voice

(734) 454-1414 fax

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