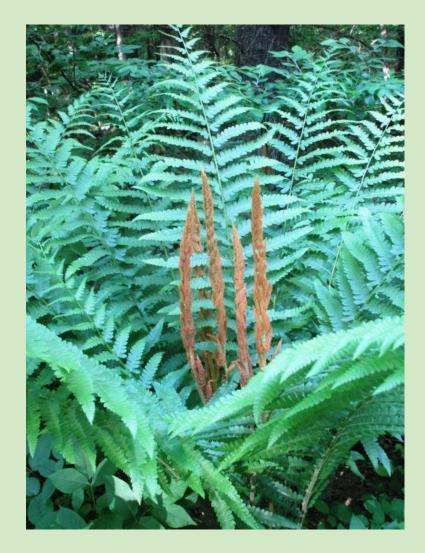
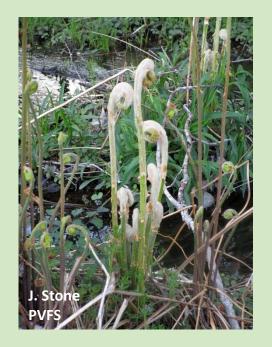
IDENTIFICATION GUIDE TO OUR MOST COMMON FERNS





Randy Stone
Pioneer Valley Fern Society







The Top Ten

- 1) Interrupted Fern
- 2) Cinnamon Fern
- 3) Sensitive Fern
- 4) Marginal Wood Fern
- 5) Evergreen Wood Fern
- 6) Christmas Fern
- 7) Lady Fern
- 8) New York Fern
- 9) Hay-scented Fern
- 10) Bracken Fern (and/or Common Polypody)



1

Location

- common roadside species
- woods, fields
- moderately dry to moist
- sun or shade
- generalist



Additional Diagnostics

- U-shaped vascular bundles
- lacks wooly tufts
- sub-leaflets usually overlap

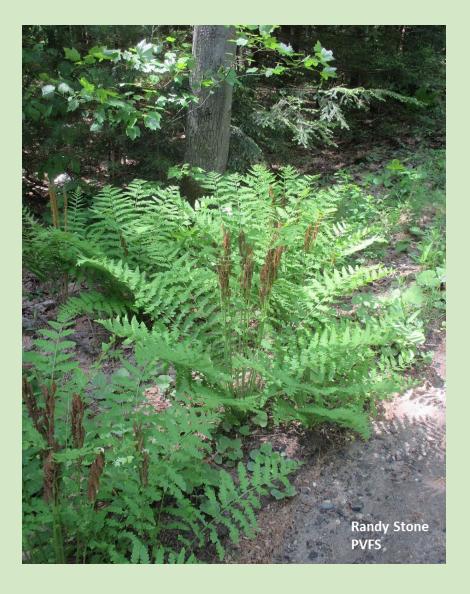
Search Image

- symmetric clump
- large, twice-cut leaves to 30"
- Dimorphic fertile leaf with distinct interruptions





Interrupted Fern Osmunda claytoniana



2 Location

- roadsides and ditches
- moist woods, fields, swamps, bogs
- wetland indicator status FACW

Search Image

- symmetric clump
- large, twice-cut leaves to 30"
- dimorphic cinnamon-colored fertile fronds
- stipe covered with cinnamon-brown hair





Additional Diagnostics

- U-shaped vascular bundles
- wooly cinnamon tufts in leaflet axils
- leaflets with long pointed tips
- sub-leaflets not overlapping

Cinnamon Fern Osmundastrum cinnamomea



3 **Sensitive Fern**Onoclea sensibilis

Location

- open or forested wetlands
- swamps, marshes, wet meadows
- sun or shade
- roadside ditches
- wetland indicator status FACW

Search Image

- clusters of single stems 12"-24"+
- once-cut* leaves with wavy edges
- yellow-green color
- dimorphic fertile frond a persistent and bead-like spike

- net-like veins
- upper pinnae with wings along rachis
- lower pair widely spaced
- stem mostly smooth, stiff, and brittle









4 Marginal Wood Fern Dryopteris marginalis

Location

- woods and roadsides
- often on stone walls, outcrops
- moderate moisture

Search Image

- symmetric clump
- twice-cut leaves to 24" fertile and sterile the same
- leathery, dark green foliage
- very scaly

- multiple round vascular bundles
- fruitdots marginal
- evergreen









Location

- woods and roadsides
- often on stone walls
- moderate moisture
- generalist

Search Image

- symmetric clump
- thrice-cut leaves to 24"
 fertile and sterile the same
- lacy foliage
- stipe very scaly

Additional Diagnostics

- multiple round vascular bundles
- fruitdots central
- evergreen





Evergreen Wood Fern *Dryopteris intermedia*



V/ES

6

Location

- generalist
- woods, roadsides, rocky slopes
- dry to moist
- semi-shade to shade



Additional Diagnostics

- evergreen
- dense light-brown scales
- fiddlehead a silvery nautilus

Christmas Fern Polystichum acrostichoides

Search Image

- dark green asymmetric clump
- once-cut leaves 12+", lustrous
- leaflets eared, finely toothed and bristle tipped, often twisted
- Dimorphic fertile leaves narrow tipped





7

Location

- woods and roadsides, ditches
- moderate moisture
- generalist

Search Image

- asymmetric clumps in masses
- thrice-cut leaves to 30" not dimorphic
- lacy foliage, translucent stems
- scales look like ground black pepper

Additional Diagnostics

- fruitdots curved, in herringbone pattern
- apostrophe-shaped vascular bundles
- ruby red color phase









Lady Fern Athyrium filix-femina



New York Fern

Parathelypteris noveboracensis

Location

- open woods or in sunny gaps
- banks and edges of roads
- common mid-slope species

Search Image

- colonies of three or more leaves to a tuft
- twice-cut leaves, 8"-20"; delicate
- blade tapering top and bottom

- stem slightly hairy above; few scales below
- fruitdots round with kidney shaped indusium
- fertile fronds slightly narrower, more erect







Location

- dry, open woods, fields and roadsides
- disturbed or cleared sites
- thrives in open sun

Search Image

- masses of single stems
- thrice-cut leaves 12-24" not dimorphic
- leaves yellowish green
- covered with fine glandular hairs
- leaf tips relaxed (bent) like hemlock

Additional Diagnostics

- straw colored stipe with dark, brittle base
- sticky feel from glandular hairs
- cup-shaped indusia
- vascular bundles a smiley face



Hay-scented Fern Dennstaedtia punctilobula









10 Bracken Fern Pteridium aquilinum

Location

- dry, sandy, open fields or woods
- disturbed sites
- roadside banks
- neutral-acid
- world-wide distribution

Search Image

- large fronds 3'-4'+ tall not dimorphic, but fertile leaves rare
- distinctive three part triangular blade
- thrice-cut but coarse in texture
- pinnae with narrow uncut tips

- stipe smooth, woody, purple-brown at base
- straw-colored above
- multiple irregularly shaped vascular bundles
- large, deeply buried rhizome
- sori continuous along margin, not common









11 Common Polypody Polypodium virginianum

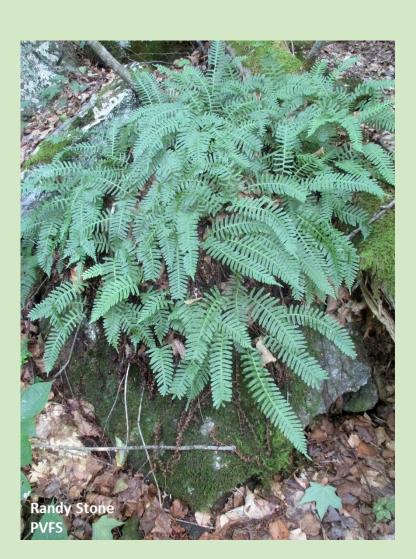
Location

- top of boulders, rocky slopes
- often very dry locations
- sun to shade

Search Image

- masses of individual stems, 6"+
- once-cut leaves, broadest in middle
- leaflets with rounded tips,
 entire and not eared

- fertile, non-fertile leaflets similar
- evergreen
- sparse light-brown scales
- large round fruitdots, no indusium







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Marsh fern, rail trail, Amherst MA