



## ***Polystichum acrostichoides* – Christmas Fern**

COMMON NAME: Christmas Fern, Christmas Shield Fern

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Polystichum acrostichoides* - From the Greek *poly* meaning many and *stichos* for rows in reference to numerous regular rows of fruitdots.

REPRODUCTION: Spores form from June to September.

SIZE: Medium-sized, coarse fern with deep evergreen, highly polished fronds, 1 to 2.5 feet long and 2 to 4 inches wide. Fertile fronds are longer and sterile fronds shorter and broader.

BEHAVIOR: Clumps remain year after year. Not a strong spreader. Fronds remain green all winter, hence the common name.

SITE REQUIREMENTS: One of the most adaptable ferns. Hardy, easy to grow in moist, humus-rich soil or on dry rocky slopes and crevices in open shade. Tolerates some sunlight. Can be planted on banks to help prevent soil erosion as the older, prostrate leaves form soil-retaining mats.

SPECIAL FEATURES: This fern is immune to disease and pests, although deer will eat it. In spring, the tightly wound silvery-scaled croziers (fiddleheads) rise amid the prostrate but still dark-green leathery leaves of last year. The leaflets resemble a Christmas stocking and were used by early settlers for holiday decorations.

NATURAL RANGE: Most of the eastern part of the US.

SUGGESTED CARE: Likes a light, leafy winter cover. Spread by dividing crowns (clumps) in spring.

COMPANION PLANTS: Violets, hepatica, spring beauty, trout lily, columbine, trillium, wild geranium, bloodroot, Jack-in-the-pulpit.