

Dicksonia antarctica - Care Guide

Caring For Dicksonia

D. antarctica is the only Australian or New Zealand tree fern which is genuinely hardy in all but the coldest UK gardens. A run of mild winters may have tempted gardeners in the recent past to try *D. fibrosa*, *D. squarrosa* and a range of trunk forming cyatheas. B&Q were selling them by the thousand a few years ago. However, after the winter of 2012 especially, gardeners have learnt the hard way that *D. antarctica* is the only survivor in all but the most mild coastal gardens in the south west of England.



Dicksonia antarctica



Dicksonia antarctica



Dicksonia fibrosa

The extraordinary thing about tree fern 'trunks' is that the pithy trunk is shrouded in a mat of aerial roots. This means that you can take a chainsaw to a tree fern trunk and cut it in half at any height. The half with the crown can be plonked in the ground wherever and will speedily root out and grow away.

In our climate *D. antarctica* can be grown as a freestanding plant virtually wherever you like in sun or, preferably, partial to full shade. Elsewhere in the UK a damp, sheltered and fully shaded spot is the best bet. These

plants grow well in the damp near water. The fronds can be 10ft long and older fronds die off and hang over the trunk. The temptation is to remove them as being unsightly but they perform a useful job in retaining moisture around the aerial roots all over the stem.



Dicksonia antarctica



Dicksonia antarctica



Dicksonia antarctica



Dicksonia crown

Protecting your tree fern from frost is shown in the attached photographs but this is unnecessary in milder parts of the country.

Planting A Tree Fern - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/Tq5lcuYeOpc>

Winter Protection - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/gUOS8414gsQ>

Winter Protection

Dicksonia antarctica commonly known as a tree fern.



1. The tree fern to wrap



2. It is most important to protect the growing point/bud.



3. Use straw, dry leaves or shredded paper to protect the unfurled leaves



4. If the temperature gets really cold tie up the leaves, as this will help to protect



5. Wrap hessian / fleece, around the top half of the trunk



6. ...and the growing point/bud, then tie this securely with string



7. Pack any gaps with again dry leaves, straw or shredded paper



8. Secure this with more fleece and string



9. A safely wrapped tree fern

Spring Tidying - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/vn5abeGnx8I?rel=0>

Gymnosperms And Angiosperms - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/VEUIeNuvSSY>

Further Reading

Further reading on the Caerhays website:-

[Tree Ferns and Australisian Plants at Caerhays - RHS LECTURE](#)

Further reading and images Caerhays Garden Diary:-

[Caerhays Garden Diary - Tree Ferns](#)

[Caerhays Garden Diary - Dicksonia](#)

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