

Flora of the Month



Photographed on the White Trail in the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

Christmas Fern

(Polystichum acrostichoides)

At-a-Glance

- Habitat: Forest settings with shade or partial shade, usually in moist soil
- Height: Fronds 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 feet long
- Reproduction: Reproduces by spores, found on the undersides of leaflets
- Range in Connecticut

Christmas fern, which is quite common in the Preserve, stays green all winter. The fronds were once used for Christmas decorations. It is common, and easy to identify from the shape of the fronds.

The Christmas fern serves as a host for butterfly larvae. In the winter, deer will occasionally graze on the fronds, but generally, it is not a common food source.

For centuries, Native Americans used an extract of the root as a remedy for rheumatism.

