

How to Care for an Ostrich Fern

Matteuccia struthiopteris

SELECT SITE:

Light Requirements: Part Shade (4-6 hrs/day) to Full Shade (more than 6 hrs/day).

This fern will grow larger; Space 24 in. away from other plants or structures.

Grows best in organically rich, humusy, consistently moist but not wet, well drained soil.

Prefers a cooler climate; intolerant of hot & humid summers.

Versatile Plant for: Woodland gardens, shaded areas.

Ideal USDA Plant Hardiness Zones: 3,4,5,6,7

PLANT PREP:

Open box upon arrival, remove packing materials to let the plant “breathe”. Remove plastic bag, tape, and newspaper. Water well. There are drainage holes in the bottom of the pot so do this outside where the extra water will drain away.

HOLE PREP:

Dig saucer shaped hole. The depth is determined by measuring the height of the roots from root flare to bottom. The width is 2-3 times the root ball diameter. Using these calculations, the ideal hole for the new bush will be approximately 6” tall by 12” wide.

PLANTING:

Put garden soil in a wheelbarrow or on a tarp. Mix the garden soil with equal amounts of mulch, peat moss, and potting soil. Place plant in hole and adjust for aesthetics. Hold in place while adding more soil, until the hole is completely filled. Push soil down until firm. Do not plant the shrub deeper than it has already been growing. Water well immediately after planting. Mulch evenly to a depth of 2-3 inches being sure to stay at least 2” away from its stems.

FUTURE MAINTENANCE:

Water well regularly, in the form of 1” of rainfall or irrigation per week (equivalent to a 5-gallon bucket full), often more frequently in extremely warm areas or if in a pot.

If desired, fertilize in spring when new growth begins. Apply 2 tbsp. of an all-purpose slow release fertilizer upon the ground in a band around the plant at least 6” away from its stems.

This plant goes completely dormant in fall. Remove dead or dying foliage anytime before spring growth begins.