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Slender Brake Fern

Pteris ensiformis

Height: 16 inches

Spread: 16 inches

Sunlight: ● ●

Hardiness Zone: (annual)

Other Names: Silver Lace Fern, Sword Brake Fern

Description:

An interesting, upright and arching mound of deeply cut, threadlike silver leaves with dark green edges; a great garden accent or container plant; protect from wind

Ornamental Features

Slender Brake Fern is primarily valued in the garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its attractive deeply cut narrow compound leaves remain silver in colour with prominent dark green tips and tinges of chartreuse throughout the year.

Landscape Attributes

Slender Brake Fern is an herbaceous annual with a shapely form and gracefully arching foliage. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and should be cut back in late fall in preparation for winter. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Slender Brake Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting
- Hanging Baskets



Slender Brake Fern in full
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Slender Brake Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



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Planting & Growing

Slender Brake Fern will grow to be about 16 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 16 inches. Although it's not a true annual, this fast-growing plant can be expected to behave as an annual in our climate if left outdoors over the winter, usually needing replacement the following year. As such, gardeners should take into consideration that it will perform differently than it would in its native habitat.

This plant does best in partial shade to shade. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments, and will benefit from being planted in a relatively sheltered location. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Slender Brake Fern is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor containers and hanging baskets. It is often used as a 'filler' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, providing a canvas of foliage against which the thriller plants stand out. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.