

THE FERN
SOCIETY OF
VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We had a visit this weekend from Alan Mortimer, of the South Australian Fern Society. You may remember Alan on the two tours that were organised in conjunction with the South Australian Fern Society to the Otways and to Tarra Valley and Bulga Park. Alan is the President of the South Australian Fern Society.

Alan and his family have just spent a week up at Mt. Bulla enjoying the snow, and stopped off to visit us on their way home. We had an enjoyable day talking ferns, and exchanging ideas, etc. for our societies.

Alan is currently working out a Fern Society Tour for 14 days to Sth. Qld., and suggested that we do the same. The tour will cost South Australian members \$300 each with hostel accommodation. They will visit Lamington National Park, Springbrook, Cunningham's Gap and many other places where there is an abundance of subtropical ferns.

The South Australian Fern Society have invited me to speak at their September meeting. Lorraine, the girls and I will have just returned from two weeks of fern hunting in Fiji, so there will be plenty to talk about.

Speaking of fern tours, for those who could not attend our last meeting, the Nelson Fern Society of New Zealand has expressed an interest in arranging a return Fern Society visit to Victoria.

I have suggested that they consider November (perhaps 1982). The tour could combine with the Melbourne Cup, for example.

The next meeting is our Annual General Meeting - your nominations should be in by now. After the election of Office-bearers, I will give a talk with slides on our recent New Zealand tour. Most members of the tour group should be there, and it should be an enjoyable evening.

Lorraine and I have been fortunate enough to make contact with a Sydney book wholesaler who imports copies of "The Fern Grower's Manual" by Barbara Jo Hoshizaki. We have ordered 40 copies; they are soft cover, and should sell for approx. \$10. We hope to have them available at our October meeting.

We should have copies of another new book for sale by either October or November. This is titled "Exotic Ferns in Australia" - more about it later.

We received only two entries for last month's competition.

There will be no competition this month, but next month the fern chosen will be a Lycopodium (Tassel Fern), which is not a true fern, but a fern ally. Bring yours along - they don't have to be large plants.

CHRIS GOUDEY
 President

FERNS AND THEIR ALLIES IN THE AUSTRALIAN HABITAT

The Australian enigma was very clearly shown to the Society's July meeting, the enigma that Australia is the world's driest continent, yet possesses pockets of luxuriant ferns abounding in most unlikely places.

The Society's speaker was Dr. J. H. Willis, formerly Assistant Government Botanist in Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens and Native Herbarium. He has devoted 12 years of research to the development of a Handbook of the Plants of Victoria, and is also noted for his revision of Wakefield's "Ferns of Victoria and Tasmania".

Over the years, Dr. Willis has been quite amazed at the number of botanists who have been led into their vocation by being attracted through the diversity of spore and methods of pollination that they devise.

"But why ferns?" asked Dr. Willis. "They don't have flowers, and they are just green looking things, but a lot of the fascination is due to their grace", he said.

Unlike other members of the vegetable kingdom, ferns survive in adverse conditions and light, often with not much moisture present, Dr. Willis observed.

The advent of ferns goes back far into the history of the vegetable kingdom and, as Dr. Willis pointed out, this is the reason they have an archaic appearance about them. One little epiphyte, called the Fork Fern, is acknowledged as one of the most archaic plants in existence. This is found locally on tree fern trunks in the Dandenongs and other rain forests throughout the State, and can be traced back 400,000,000 years, which is long before flowering plants had started to evolve.

Dr. Willis told the audience that, after a while, experienced observers begin to anticipate the types of ferns which will appear in different types of country. For instance, if there is a rocky precipice in the shade with water trickling over it, there are bound to be ferns of some kind in the rocky crevices. Interestingly, that applies not only to the fertile part of Australia but also in gorges and ranges in outback Australia where the temperature can sizzle above the century mark for weeks on end in summer. There, little micro climates occur perpetually in the shade and the moisture of the gorges. In a part of Mt. Giles in the Macdonnell Ranges, there is a portion that looks like a tropical fern jungle, a little oasis with shade and abundant moisture with tropical growth appearing out of their normal element, Dr. Willis told us.

Most of Dr. Willis' talk featured excellent slides taken throughout Australia, in both the rain forest temperate areas and arid areas. During his slide presentation, Dr. Willis made the observation that, unlike New Zealand, which abounds in fern types and fern allies, Australia has only 600 various species. Some of these are highly specialised, and most are concentrated in the warm rain forests of Queensland.

.../Cont'd.

FERNS AND THEIR ALLIES IN THE AUSTRALIAN HABITAT (Cont'd.)

Probably due to its generally damp climate, Victoria has well over 100 of these species native to the State. There are about 200 in New South Wales, with the bulk of the rest mostly in Queensland. "It's very surprising that there are very few ferns in Western Australia", Dr. Willis said, "particularly as parts of the south-west of the State receive over 60 inches of rain, but the forest floors have very few ferns occupying them.

The audience found the contrasts in the slides most interesting - particularly the Rock Fern which is found in Victoria and which has a drought resisting genus. This is capable of living through months of practically no rainfall then, when the moisture comes again, new fronds are sent out.

Another attractive fern shown was the Blanket Fern which is found in several States. It is called Blanket Fern because the underside of the leaves is covered with a coating of sticky little hairs. The type found in Victoria is almost odourless, but Dr. Willis came across a type of Blanket Fern in Griffith New South Wales which has a heavy odour similar to perspiration.

Lagoons are also areas where ferns are found and aquatic ferns have provided some of the staple food for aborigines. When the lagoons dried out, little spore cases would be left on the mud. Lubras would gather these and convert them into a coarse meal. We were reminded that King, of the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition, was befriended by the aborigines and kept alive for several months by eating $\frac{1}{2}$ kg a day of this meal.

The Society was indeed fortunate to have a speaker of Dr. Willis' knowledge.

OF BONE DUST, AND OTHER MATTERS

Keith Hutchinson

At our July meeting, the bone dust sold out very quickly, so we will have more available at our August meeting.

I must stress that bone dust is a slow-acting, long-lasting plant food, and should be used only in small amounts. A good rule is one matchboxful to a two-gallon bucket.

PANNIFEX have just released a new organic fertilizer called "Supreme". I am very impressed with it, and for the information of members have included their report on this product.

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<u>Nitrogen:</u> (organic)	as Pure Animal Blood	...	...	...	...	...	1.0%
	as Bone Dust	...	...	...	...	...	1.3%
	as Hoof & Horn	...	...	...	...	...	5.2%
	TOTAL	...	...	...	...	...	7.5%
<u>Phosphorus:</u> (organic)	as citrate soluble	...	...	...	...	...	1.8%
	as citrate insoluble	...	...	...	...	...	2.2%
	TOTAL	...	...	...	...	...	4.0%
<u>Potassium</u>	as Sulphate	...	...	...	...	...	9.5%
<u>Trace Elements:</u>							
	Iron, as oxide	...	...	...	...	...	1.75%
	Sulphur	...	...	...	...	...	4.0%
	Calcium	...	...	...	...	...	8.0%
	Magnesium	...	...	...	...	...	.2%
	Boron	...	...	...	...	...	.0015%
	Copper	...	...	...	...	...	.00625%
	Manganese	...	...	...	...	...	.031%
	Molybdenum	...	...	...	...	...	.0005%
	Zinc	...	...	...	...	...	.0125%

THE ABOVE INFORMATION WAS PROVIDED IN AN INFORMATION BULLETIN FROM
W. PRIDHAM (AUST) PTY. LTD., 3 ALICK STREET, BROOKLYN.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Committee members are delighted to bring to you our "New Look" Fern Society of Victoria Newsletter.

We hope that you approve, and look forward to hearing your comments.

Unfortunately, details about the talented photographer who provided the new cover picture were not available when the newsletter was printed, but this will be covered in the next issue - perhaps we may be able to print some members' reactions as well.

If you are a keen photographer, or just an enthusiastic amateur, and would like to see your work used as a future cover for the Fern Society Newsletter, you are invited to submit black and white photographs for consideration.

It is hoped that we will be able to "ring the changes" each year.

- DIARY DATES -

AUGUST 13TH	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by talk and slides on the recent New Zealand tour, presented by Chris Goudey.
SEPTEMBER 10TH	OPEN NIGHT - Talks by members of the Society
OCTOBER 8TH	NOEL FITTS, speaking on sprinkler installations, general nursery equipment, including greenhouses and watering
NOVEMBER 12TH	HARRY JACKSON
DECEMBER 10TH	CHRISTMAS BREAK-UP

NOTE: In the event of a power strike on the evening of any meeting, we regret that the meeting must be cancelled.

TIME OF MEETINGS: 8 p.m.

VENUE: Burnley Horticultural School Hall, Burnley

SOME COMMON NAMES OF STAGHORN FERNS (Cont'd. from back page)

Seven species, though well documented in the literature, persist without common names. These follow:

12. *ellisii* Baker
13. *grande* (Fee) Presl.
14. *hottumi* Jonch. et Hennipm.
15. *madagascariense* Baker
16. *quadridichotomum* (Bonap.) Tardieu
17. *ridleyi* Christ.
18. *vassei* Poisson

These species for the most part are relatively new and for various and sundry reasons no common names are attached to them.

It is apparent that for the benefit of plant scientists throughout the world every distinct species should have one name understood by all. This is the Latin name. Usage dictates a middle ground in the choice between the Latin, botanical or scientific name on the one hand, and common, local or vernacular name on the other hand. SPN and subsequent publications have failed to record a complete list of common names, hence the only sure way to identify a staghorn fern is to call it by its Latin name, the universal language of the scientific community. This is not to say that common names will not persist for cultivated plants, weeds, and most other conspicuous plants that occur in many different countries in the language of each country.

Literature cited:

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- Olson, W. W. 1977. The fern dictionary. Los Angeles International Fern Society. 132 p.
- Webster, N. 1975. Webster's new twentieth century dictionary. Collins World, Inc., New York. 2129 p.

Ralph H. Hughes
Platynerium Hobbyist

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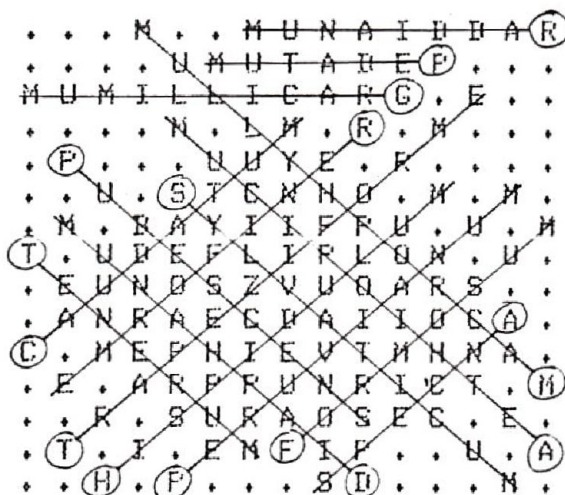
- * Large range of native and exotic species
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SOME UNUSUAL STOCK AT THE MOMENT

Dryandria rigidula, Qld.	Dryopteris carthusiana, U.K.
Gleichenia microphylla, Vic.	Doodia media, Vic.
Sticherus lobatus, Vic.	Dryopteris filix-mas, U.K.
Gonophlebium subauriculatum var. knightii, Qld.	

DID YOU COMPLETE LAST MONTH'S PUZZLE?

HERE IS THE ANSWER KEY:



FIND THESE HIDDEN WORDS IN THE PUZZLE

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| ✓AETHIOPICUM | ✓ANCEPS | ✓CAUDATUM |
| ✓DIAPHANUM | ✓FORMOSUM | ✓GRACILLIMUM |
| ✓HISPIDULUM | ✓MACROPHYLLUM | ✓PEDATUM |
| ✓PERUVIANUM | ✓PUDESCENS | ✓RADDIANUM |
| ✓RENIFORME | ✓SYLVATICUM | ✓TENERUM |
| ✓TRAPEZIFORME | | |

SOME INTERESTING OLD FERNS

by Ray Best

Some of our present day ferns do resemble the fossil ferns that geologists have found; they call their branch of botany "paleobotany". However, the vast majority of modern ferns are quite different, having adapted to environmental changes. In Australia, we do have a few types that are quite remarkable in their likeness to their early relatives, the Psilotales from the Devonian Period some four hundred million years ago. The psilophytes came well before our ferns that are called Pteridophytes. Australia's ancient representatives are classed as "Psilotaceae", covering *Psilotum* and *Tmesipteris*. Contrary to much stated opinion, the *Psilotum* species are widely distributed throughout the tropics of the old and new world. Quite recently, in a television nature series, *Psilotum nudum* was photographed in Europe. However, it does appear that the *Tmesipteris* family are confined to Australasia. It is assumed that these two genera are the most primitive of all the living ferns.

The species of *Psilotum* one of which is epiphytic (i.e. growing on another plant but not deriving nourishment from it) are green, leafless and rootless plants of xerophytic appearance (a desert like plant) and of mycorrhizic nutrition (associated with a fungus). The plant is attached to the soil or caudex of a tree fern by means of the hairs which cover the rhizomes. *Psilotum nudum* grows upright, the shoots bifurcating (dividing in two) freely with some unequal development. They bear small scale-like outgrowths in the centre of which develop synangia which consist of three fused sporangia supported on short lateral spurs. Both the synangia and spores are a bright gold colour.

Now to the *Tmesipteris* species that are epiphytic, being attached firmly and deeply to their host plant or tree fern trunk. They produce tough trailing stems that bear leaf-like structures surrounding the centre; they are rootless and of mycorrhizic nutrition. Synangia, consisting of two fused sporangia, are borne on the distal region of the shoot on forked fertile leaf-like structures. The spores germinate in soil or humus and give rise to small, pale, saprophytic prothalli with mycorrhizic nutrition. These prothalli bear antheridia and archegonia which resemble those of other ferns. It appears that there are three types of *Psilotum*, namely

Psilotum companatum .. *Psilotum nudum* .. *Psilotum triquetrum*.

To date, twelve species of *Tmesipteris* have been recorded, seven of which are listed here.

Tmesipteris billardieri .. *Tmesipteris elongata* .. *Tmesipteris lanceolata*
Tmesipteris ovata .. *Tmesipteris pava* .. *Tmesipteris tannensis* ..
Tmesipteris truncata.

Unfortunately, they are not easily kept alive in cultivation, and even when given the most careful treatment, usually die. Often they will survive a number of years in a terrarium situation. Their fungal association makes spore growing difficult if not impossible, making their growth commercially impractical.

As they are such unique ferns, it is better that we allow them to flourish in their natural environment, rather than remove them and accelerate their extermination.

SOME COMMON NAMES OF
STAGHORN FERNS

by Ralph Hughes, Florida, U.S.A.

What's in a name? The phrase "staghorn fern" is a generally accepted genus common name for this group of plants in the United States, and the botanical name *Platycerium* is favoured the world over. Other common names have come into use for some of the species as well, but not for others, and in Australia the species common name is widespread apart from a reference to the genus.

For one interested in composition of words, an unabridged dictionary suggests derivatives of names that have become part of our everyday language. As an example, Webster (1975) refers to the staghorn fern as any fern of the genus *Platycerium* wherein stag is taken from the name of the full grown deer or the male of some other animals, such as the caribou, and horn is drawn from the antler of a deer, which is shed annually - the common name "staghorn" so-called because in one or more of its several species the fertile fronds fork in such a way as to resemble the antlers of a stag.

The term "elkhorn fern" for the genus seems a less popular contribution to our horticultural heritage and according to Webster's definition is less precise, merely that elkhorn fern is a fern that resembles the horns of an elk. More often the term "staghorn" refers to the genus *Platycerium* and the name "elkhorn" to a species (Olson 1977). There are exceptions, of course. For species indigenous to Australia, as noted previously, a common name for the genus is omitted and the terms "staghorn" and "elkhorn" are species within the genus (Jones and Clemensha 1978). In Florida, on the other hand, elkhorn is a local name for *Polypodium polycarpon* 'Grandiceps'.

Additionally, in the case of staghorn, its genus name contrived from the Latin is also a common name, as platycerium or platycerium fern for *Platycerium*, or as the nickname "platy", or as a common name in the vernacular as "stag". On occasion too, a common name of the genus in one region may be the species elsewhere, as for example in Australia noted above, staghorn is *Platycerium superbum* and elkhorn is *Platycerium bifurcatum*. In common, everyday language they are respectively, stags and elks.⁽¹⁾

Common names are available from countless sources and the list is not exhaustive. The *Fern Dictionary* (Olson 1977) is the basis in this article for the genus common name "staghorn fern", this representing its widespread acceptance in the United States (Bailey and Bailey 1977, Graf 1978, Hoshizaki 1975, Kelsey and Dayton 1942).

(1) Personal communication with Don Henry, tour guide with whom the author toured *Platycerium* habitats in rainforest country near Wauchope, New South Wales, Australia, in May, 1980.

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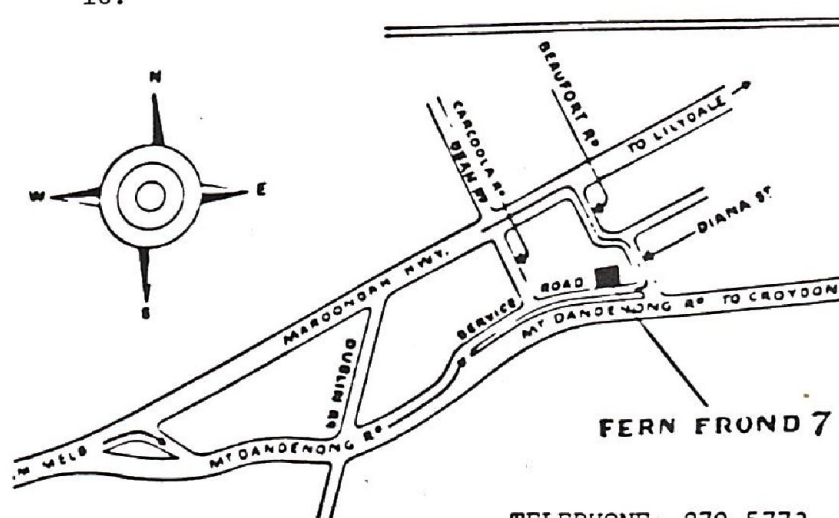
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SPORE LIST - AUGUST, 1981NOTE: NO SPORE BANK IN AUGUST

ACROSTICHUM SPECIOSUM(10-80)
ADIANTUM AETHIOPICUM(1-81)
CAUDATUM(6-80)
CONCINNUM(10-79)
* FORMOSUM(5-80)
GRACILLIMUM(7-80)
PERUVIANUM(4-81)
RADDIANUM 'BRIDAL VEIL'(4-81)
RADDIANUM 'ELEGANS'(8-80)
RADDIANUM 'MULTICEPS'(8-80)
RADDIANUM 'PACIFIC LADY'(8-80)
RADDIANUM 'SLEEPING BEAUTY'(3-81)
SYLVATICUM(8-80)
TENERUM 'FERGUSONII'(8-80)
AMPHINEURON OPULENTUM(2-81)
ANOGRAMMA LEPTOPHYLLA(11-80)
ARACHNIOIDES ARISTATA(8-80)
ARISTATA VARIGATA(2-80)
ASPLENIUM AUSTRALASICUM(6-81)
BULBIFERUM (NATIVE)(12-80)
FLABELLIFOLIUM(11-80)
NIDUS(10-80)
SCLEROPRIUM(7-80)
ATHYRIUM ALPESTRE AMERICANUM(8-80)
BLECHNUM AMBIGUUM(1-80)
ARTICULATUM(11-80)
CAMFIELDII(7-80)
CARTILAGINEUM(5-81)
CHAMBERSII(3-80)
DISCOLOR(12-79)
FLUVIATILE(4-80)
GIBBUM(4-81)
MINUS(8-80)
NUDUM(7-80)
OCCIDENTALE(5-80)
ORIENTALE(12-79)
PATERSONII(7-80)
PENNA-MARINA(1-81)
SPICANT(7-80)
WATTSII(4-80)
WHELANI(7-80)
SP.(KING IS)(12-79)

CHEILANTHES CALIFORNICA(6-80)
DISTANS(1-81)
TENUIFOLIA(11-79)
SP.(S.E.QLD)(1-81)
CHRISTELLA DENTATA(3-81)
PARASITICA(5-80)
CHRISTOPTERIS VARIENS(4-80)
CIBOTIUM SCHIEDEL(12-78)
COLYSIS AMPLA(1-80)
CULCITA DUBIA(3-80)
CYATHEA AUSTRALIS(10-80)
BROWNII(2-80)
CELERICA(7-80)
CONTAMINANS(12-79)
COOPERI(2-81)
CUNNINGHAMII(2-80)
DEALBATA(7-80)
LEICHHARDTIANA(8-80)
MEDULLARIS(5-80)
MEDULLARIS & SMITHII(6-79)
SMITHII('80)
WOOLLSIANA(8-79)
SP.(PHILIPPINES)(12-79)
CYRTOMIUM FALCATUM(4-81)
CYSTOPTERIS FRAGILIS(10-80)
DICKSONIA ANTARCTICA(3-81)
FIBROSA(6-81)
LANATA(?)
SQUARROSA(1-80)
YOUNGIAE(5-80)
SP.(QLD)(5-80)
DIPLAZIUM AUSTRALE(3-80)
DILATATUM(5-80)
DOODIA ASPERA(3-81)
MEDIA(12-80)
DORYOPTERIS CONCOLOR(8-80)
PEDATA(11-80)
DRYOPTERIS AEMULA(?)
CRASSIRHIZOMA(8-77)
GOLDIANA(?)
SP.(JAPAN)(4-80)
GLEICHENIA MICROPHYLLA(10-80)

- HYPOLEPIS AUSTRALIS(1-81)
 LASTREOPSIS ACUMINATA(12-80)
 DECOMPOSITA(7-80)
 HISPIDA(4-80)
 MARGINANS(12-79)
 MUNITA(8-80)
 NEPHROIDIODES(7-80)
 SMITHIANA(7-80)
 LORINERIA AREOLATA(11-79)
 LUNATHYRIUM JAPONICUM(1-81)
 LYGODIUM CIRCINNATUM(3-81)
 FLEXUOSUM(8-80)
 MACROTHELYPTERIS POLYPODIODES(11-79)
 MATTEUCCIA ORIENTALIS(?)
 STRUTHIOPTERIS(12-79)
 MICROLEPIA SPELUNCAE(8-80)
 MICROSORIUM PAPPEI(8-80)
 PELLAEA FALCATA(1-81)
 FALCATA NANA(11-80)
 PARADOXA(11-80)
 PLATYCERIUM CORONARIUM(12-79)
 HOLTUMII(12-79)
 SUPERBUM(6-81)
 VEITCHII(8-80)
 WANDAE('80)
 PNEUMATOPTERIS SOGERENSIS(12-80)
- POLYSTICHUM ACULEATUM(2-80)
 AUSTRALIENSE(5-80)
 FORMOSUM(5-81)
 LENTUM(12-80)
 MUNITUM(7-80)
 PROLIFERUM(8-80)
 SETIFERUM 'ACUTILOBUM'(6-81)
 STANDISHII(8-80)
 TSUSE-SIMENSE(7-80)
 VESTITUM(10-80)
 PTERIS BLUMENHA(12-79)
 COMANS(1-80)
 TREMULA(9-80)
 TRIPARTITA(12-79)
 UMBROSA(12-80)
 VITTATA(3-81)
 RUMOHRA ADIANTIFORMIS(EXOTIC)(1-81)
 ADIANTIFORMIS(NATIVE)(1-81)
 SPHAEROSTEPHANOS TAIWANENSIS(8-79)
 STICHERUS TENER(1-81)
 TECTARIA MUELLERI(7-80)
 TODEA BARBARA(3-81)
 TREEFERNS (MIXED CYATHEAS)(?)
 TRISMERIA TRIFOLIATA(2-80)
 WOODWARDIA RADICANS(7-80)

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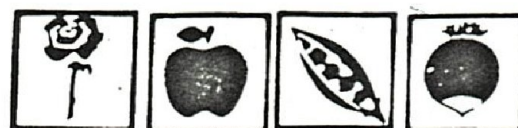
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SOME COMMON NAMES OF STAGHORN FERNS (Cont'd.)

An earlier work, *Standardized Plant Names* (Kelsey and Dayton), had coordinated and standardized the species common names in publications prepared by personnel of the United States Department of Agriculture for whom the author of this article was a plant scientist during the period 1946-1974. A stated goal of the committee for *Standardized Plant Names* (or SPN) as first constituted in 1915 was to encourage the use of a standardized Latin name and a standardized common name for all plants throughout the world. Its second and final edition was published in 1942 and comprised 675 pages.

Accordingly, SPN is favored in the disposition to follow of species common names on the principle that priority should prevail. Disposition is based on an array of the 18 generally recognized species (Hoshizaki 1972, Hoshizaki 1975). Ranking of Latin names is alphabetical. Assignment of common names is according to priority, reasoning, and usage.

Platycerium Desv. species names from SPN are:

<u>Latin Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
1. <i>angolense</i> Welw. ex Baker	Angola staghorn
2. <i>bifurcatum</i> (Cav.) C. Chr.	Common staghorn
3. <i>coronarium</i> (Mueller) Desv.	Disk staghorn
4. <i>hillii</i> T. Moore	Green staghorn
5. <i>stemaria</i> (Palisot) Desv.	Triangle staghorn
6. <i>superbum</i> Jonch. et Hennipm.	Giant staghorn
7. <i>wallichii</i> Hook.	India staghorn
8. <i>willinckii</i> T. Moore	Java staghorn

Of these, four common names relate to an obvious feature of the plant itself, i.e. common (ubiquitous), disk (alluding to its separately stalked semi-circular fertile spore lobe), green (color), triangle (a somewhat vague reference to shape of the fertile frond), and giant (size), and three refer to country of origin, i.e. Angola, India and Java.

Two species common names are drawn from *Tropica* (Graf 1978), as noted below:

<u>Latin Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
9. <i>andinum</i> Baker	American staghorn
10. <i>wandae</i> Rac.	Queen staghorn

One species traces to its South American origin in Peru and Bolivia, and the other to Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands with sovereignty over its point of origin in Dutch New Guinea.

One species common name is taken from *Australian Ferns and Fern Allies* (Jones and Clemensha 1978), as follows:

<u>Latin Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
11. <i>veitchii</i> (Underw.) C. Chr.	Silver staghorn

This is the silver elkhorn of Australia of which the term "silver" appropriately distinguishes a unique feature for yearlong appearance of the entire plant.