

ABN 85 086 216 704

NEWSLETTER

THE SOCIETY OF
ORCHID CULTIVATORS



HARD FERN
Blechnum spicant

102

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JULY/AUGUST
2007

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

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Our Society's Objectives.

The objectives of the Society are:

- *to bring together persons interested in ferns and allied plants*
- *to promote the gathering and dissemination of information about ferns*
- *to stimulate public interest in ferns and*
- *to promote the conservation of ferns and their habitats.*

OFFICE BEARERS:

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Jack Barrett 9375 3670, Gay Stagoll 9844 1558,
Norma Hodges 9878 9584. Brenda Girdlestone 9390 7073 and Mirini Lang 9886 6109.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

*Single	\$15.00	*Pensioner/student	\$12.00	*Family	\$17.00
*Pensioner Family	\$14.00	*Organisation	\$17.00		
*Overseas	\$22.00 (Payment by international bank cheque in \$A please. Sent by Airmail.)				

***Subscriptions fall due on 1st July each year.**

MEETING VENUES: The Kevin Heinze Garden Centre at 39 Wetherby Road, Doncaster (Melway 47; H1).
Other meetings at members' gardens or as advertised on the following page.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the personal views of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Society, nor does mention of a product constitute its endorsement.

Timetable for evening general meetings:

7.30	Pre-meeting activities - sale of ferns. Spore, books, merchandise and special effort tickets. Also library loans and lots of conversation.
8.00	General meeting
8.15	Workshops and demonstrations.
9.15	Fern identification and pathology, special effort draw.
9.45	Supper and another good yarn.
10.00	Close.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2007

JULY MEETING

Thursday the 19th, at 8.00pm at the Kevin Heinze Centre Wetherby Road, Doncaster.

Speaker will be Barry White on:

Genus Polypodium/Phlebodium

This will be a good chance to learn more about this interesting group of ferns. There are many in cultivation and it easily grown and it would be expected that some rarer plants will be on display this night. The growing habit of these ferns is such that many larger plants maybe on display. So if you have a good specimen or a rarer variety please bring it along for all of us to enjoy. Learn how easy and rewarding this group of ferns are.

Competition category: **Genus Polypodium/Phlebodium.**

AUGUST MEETINGS

Thursday the 16th, at 8.00pm at the Kevin Heinze Centre Wetherby Rd, Doncaster.

We again have the opportunity for a night with Chris Goudey, Chris being a founding member of our society and the first President of such, has kindly agreed to give a talk on:

Fern trip to Zimbabwe

Chris is always a favorite speaker and never disappoints the members who attend his talks so come along there will be many slides to see as well as information.

Competition category: **Ferns of Zimbabwe.**

PRESIDENTIAL PERORATION

We foreshadowed the likelihood that this year the Society would accept an invitation to exhibit at the Gardening Australia Melbourne Expo in October, particularly in view of the fact that we had to accept the reality that it was not feasible to hold the usual Fern Show in April. We have now officially accepted, and will have a small stand at the Expo, which will be held from October 5 to 7 inclusive, at the Caulfield Racecourse as usual. Please consider offering to help staff the stand (just let any Committee member know of your willingness), and if you expect to be able to offer a fern or ferns in fine condition for the display, please tell us ahead of the time. We'll have only a small space (2.5 metres wide) which will limit the number of plants which can be displayed - obviously we'll try for a good variety of interesting ferns, in really top condition, to put on a good show in the interests of promoting ferns.

Gay and I got back from our garden visiting adventures in UK and Ireland in good shape early in June. We got to see a total of 43 fine gardens, only a couple of which we'd seen before, and a great many ferns (there are even quite a few in the wild in many of the locations we visited). It was exciting to see the large numbers of mature tree ferns in many gardens in the south western parts of both Ireland and England - we knew they were there, but we'd never been to these parts before. It was also impossible not to notice that garden plants - and pretty much everything else on sale at garden centres in UK - which have always been extremely expensive compared with the prices we're used to - are now even more expensive than ever. And guess what? - tree ferns are well into the "most expensive" category.

It seems the weather at our place was still pretty dry whilst we were away during May, and it looks like it finished off at least a couple more of our Dicksonias in the garden, and probably a couple more juvenile rainforest trees too. But at least other localities got rather more rain, and in more recent weeks the rains have been improving on the equivalent levels for the same weeks in the past couple of years (not to mention the flooding in parts further a field). So things do appear to be looking up a bit. To my mind the low rainfall during autumn, winter and early spring of 2006 set us up for the very difficult time we had in gardens last summer - as plants entered the warm weather already stressed.

Maybe it's just a case of hope triumphing over experience (and receding memories of the difficulties of keeping plants watered over last summer), but we've been getting on with replanting in our garden where we've lost plants, and we know from the revived activity at garden centres that lots of other gardeners are doing likewise.

Barry Staggall

Ferns in the Southwest of Britain and Ireland -

The accompanying photos are just a few of the many we took of ferns in the Southwest Counties of Ireland and in Cornwall & Devon, UK on our recent trip. Many gardens in both of these regions have an abundance of ferns, including many areas of mature tree ferns - mostly those from the cool temperate areas of Australia and New Zealand. These have done extremely well there, since having been introduced into gardens from quite early in the nineteenth century.

Many people in Ireland appear to accept an old story about how these tree ferns happened to arrive in their country - that they were taken on board sailing ships in southern ports as ballast, and then they revived fortuitously when they were offloaded. The story was retold as an interesting aside by the Park Superintendent of Muckross Gardens, who is also responsible for managing a number of other important heritage gardens. He didn't seem to regard it as very credible.

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September 2007 Excursion to East Gippsland (and possibly beyond)

Planning is under way for our September excursion into East Gippsland to visit parts rich in ferns. We expect that members will use (or share) personal transport to make the trip, and that most will wish to stay over for two nights. Most likely timing is during the first half of the month (or possibly around mid-month - school holidays commence on 21 September so we'll probably avoid that time as this may make it easier to get the necessary accommodation).

We'd also like, if possible, to offer a visit into the fern-rich Mt. Dromedary locality near Tilba Tilba off the Princes Highway in the southeastern corner of NSW, which may mean a further overnight stay for those interested.

As the issue date for the next Newsletter will be too late to settle a list of those wishing to join this excursion, we ask that all members who have an interest in participating (depending, of course, upon whether the final itinerary and dates chosen are suitable for them) contact a Committee member and register their interest.

We will then recontact all members who have expressed interest to finalise arrangements. Don't forget to indicate whether you may be interested in the East Gippsland portion or the proposed NSW extension, or both, and how many individuals you may wish places for. Please also tell us if you'd expect to use your own transport, or whether you would hope to have an opportunity to share transport with another participant.



Gardening Australia Expo Melbourne Caulfield Race Course October 5-7, 2007

The Fern Society has accepted an invitation to take up a display stand at this year's Expo.

This is an opportunity to promote ferns and the Society as part of an event which draws large numbers of visitors interested in gardening.

We will aim to provide a display of high quality and to demonstrate the diversity of ferns, and our stand should be staffed during all Expo opening hours to answer visitors' questions, promote our Society, and provide security and care for our display.

Please consider volunteering some of your time to assist with setting up/dismantling the display, and/or staffing our stand during this event.

Our stand will only be quite small (2.5 metres wide) and our aim must be an eye-catching display of ferns in top condition. As the event gets closer, we'd very much appreciate members telling us about any fern they'd be prepared to offer for the display which they feel because of its condition or eye-catching form might be especially suitable. Bear in mind that in view of the limitations of the space, we may find it difficult to use ferns in baskets (particularly large ones).

Please give Don Fuller, Barry White or Barry Stagoll some details about plants you'd like to offer for the display it would be most helpful if you could do this by early September.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS NOW DUE

- Membership renewal fees for the year 2007/8 are now **due and prompt payment would be appreciated**. Our financial year commences on the 1st July. **Please use the enclosed renewal form.**

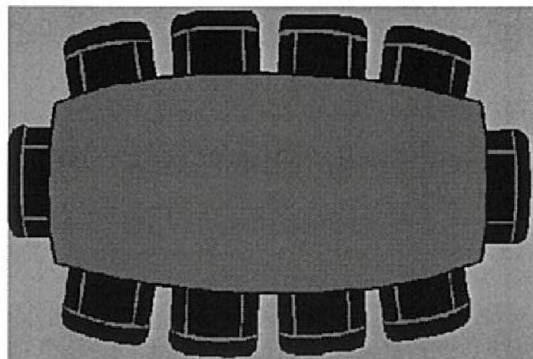
There are a number of members who for various reasons have already paid their membership for 2007/8 (these include who have recently joined the society). These can be identified by a small bright red dot on the address label. **If your newsletter has a red dot on the address label please ignore any renewal form that may be included.**

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The twenty seventh Annual General Meeting of the Fern Society of Victoria Inc. will be held at 8.00 p.m. on Thursday the 20th of September 2006 at the Kevin Heinze Garden Centre, 39 Weatherby Road, Doncaster.

Business to be transacted will be:

1. To receive and deal with the Presidents Report on behalf of the Committee of Management.
2. To receive and deal with the Treasurer's Report.
3. The election of Office Bearers and Committee Members of the Committee of Management for 2007□08.
4. General Business.



Nominations for Committee of Management

Nominations are now called for the positions of Office Bearers and Committee Members for the year August 2007 to September 2008. Nominations should be in writing, be signed by the proposer and seconder, and include the written consent of the nominee. They must be received by the 13th September (not less than seven days prior to the Annual General Meeting). Nominations may be called at the Annual General Meeting only if insufficient have been received previously to fill all vacancies.

General Business

Items to be discussed and voted on under General Business at the Annual General Meeting must be notified to the Secretary in writing not less than 21 days prior to the meeting.

Barry Stagoll President.

April meeting

BLECHNUMS

By Don Fuller

Blechnums belong to the family of Blechnaceae of which there are 9 genera throughout the world. There are 4 genera in Australia – Blechnum, Doodia, Stenochlaena, Pteridoblechnum. These last confined to Queensland. The name blechnum comes from the Greek word "bieknon" meaning a fern. Their common names in Australia is Water Ferns, in NZ and USA they are known as Hard Ferns. The distribution is Worldwide with approx 200 species mostly found in the southern hemisphere.

In Australia there are 18 or 19 (one status not determined) species plus three endemic species on Lord Howe Island and one on Norfolk Island.

General characteristics are:-

- Fronds are usually pinnate occasionally bipinnate.
- Most species are dimorphic with the pinnae on the fertile frond significantly different to the sterile frond.
- Sori are parallel and close to the midrib and protected by a linear indusia attached on the outside and opening towards the midrib.
- Rhizome often creeping and sometimes forming a short trunk.
- Quite a number produce very colourful new fronds.
- Sterile pinnae have free and often forked veins.

In Victoria we have 9/10 species which are:-

Blechnum cartilagineum (Gristle Fern) also found in Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania.

This fern has a short creeping to erect rhizome and is the only Victorian blechnum which is not dimorphic. It is a tall, erect, tufted fern with pale green fronds. New fronds are usually bronze to pink. Found in a wide range of conditions often in sandy areas. This fern will tolerate some dryness.

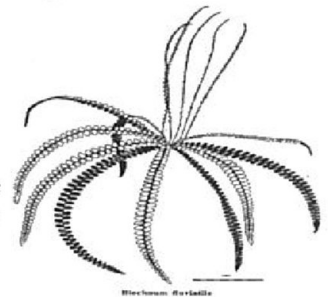


Blechnum chambersii (Lance Water Fern) also found in New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia.

An attractive fern with dark green fronds which are semi erect to pendent. It is a fern found in very wet areas usually on the banks of creeks where the fronds hang down like a curtain. It is a difficult fern to cultivate.

Blechnum fluviatile (Ray Water Fern) also found in New South Wales, Tasmania.

A small tufted attractive dimorphic fern. The non fertile fronds tend to form a rosette and the fertile fronds are erect, taller and narrow. It is found in very moist and shady areas.



Blechnum minus (Soft Water Fern) also found in Queensland, New South Wales, and Tasmania.

The name "minus" is misleading as the fronds can be very tall. It is dimorphic with the fertile fronds much narrower. Non fertile fronds are bright shiny green with pinkish new growth. It spreads readily by underground stolons and is a fern found in open very moist areas.

Continued page 58

Calendar of events

September:

Early this month will be an excursion to Gippsland area and beyond.
For more information see page 53 of this newsletter.

Thursday 20th will be our Annual General Meeting followed by a guest speaker to be advised in next newsletter.

October:

5th - 7th are the dates of Gardening Australia expo at Caulfield race course more information on pages 53 and 57 of this newsletter.

Thursday 18th will be a visit from our South Australia member Ron Robbins who will be talking about platycerium, Drynaria, and Lycopodium.

November:

Thursday 15th a presentation by Barry White on some ferns and gardens of the United Kingdom

December:

We will finish off the year with our annual get gathering for lunch at the Kevin Heinze Centre, date and more information will be in the next newsletter.

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DIARY NOTE



2007 Gardening Australia Expo will provide an inspirational experience for Victorians

This spectacular gardening expo brings to life and showcases the expertise and talents of the ABC's popular *Gardening Australia* TV program.

Gardening Australia presenters appear on stage to answer your questions and provide gardening advice. Other horticultural and landscape industry experts will also be on hand to help create a dynamic, informative and educational event for gardeners, from beginners to seasonal enthusiasts.

Garden lovers will find the Expo a practical and inspirational experience.

Event Summary:

Event Name: Gardening Australia Expo
Date: Friday-Sunday October 5-7
Event Time: Open daily 9.30am-5pm
Location: Caulfield Racecourse, Caulfield
Cost: Adults: \$16 Pensioner/Senior: \$13 Family: \$38
Children 5-16yrs: \$6 Children under 5: FREE.
Children must be accompanied by an adult.
Groups: 15+ people \$13 each. All prices include GST.
Ticket sales onsite cash only.
Tickets available at the door or on-line at www.abcgardeningexpo.com.au
Pre-booked tickets are available for groups of 15 people or more.
Call: 02 9452 7575

Continued from page 52

Ferns in the Southwest of Britain and Ireland

To our mind, this explanation for the presence is highly improbable - who would have gone to the trouble of cutting tree ferns some distance from a port merely to provide a source of ballast! There's little doubt that the plants were imported deliberately, having raised much interest from plant lovers as desirable specimens to obtain for their gardens, just as they avidly collected all sorts of other newly-discovered plant species as the flora of newly-explored regions was examined.

The photo taken in a large glasshouse is of tree ferns and marattias in the Irish National Botanic Garden in Glasnevin, Dublin, where there is a magnificent group of glasshouses originating from Victorian times. The group of Osmundas in another of the photos is a typical scene - sometimes long-established plantings of these ferns form massive communities.

Gay & Barry Stagoll

Pictures on pages 59, 61, 63.

Blechnums



Blechnum nudum (Fishbone Water Fern) also found in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania.

A tall tufted fern with an erect rhizome which can form a trunk to 50 cms. It is dimorphic with the fertile fronds much narrower. It reproduces easily from underground stolons which enable it to form large colonies. It is a common fern in moist shaded or filtered light positions. There is an attractive form from Tasmania called "Forcett Feather".

Blechnum patersonii (Strap Water Fern) also found in Queensland, New South Wales, and Tasmania, also found in Lord Howe Island.

A small dimorphic fern with dark green mature non fertile fronds, new growth is pinkish. The fertile fronds are erect and narrower. The rhizome is erect and tufted. It is a fern of very moist shaded areas and resents disturbance. There are two subspecies \square subsp. *patersonii* and subsp. *Queenslandicum*.



Blechnum penna-marina subsp. *alpina* (Alpine Water Fern) also found in New South Wales, and Tasmania. This is the smallest blechnum in Australia. It has a slender, wiry, long creeping rhizome and small dark green fronds. It grows at high altitude in boggy conditions where it forms a low matted ground cover. If kept moist it will grow in full sunlight. It is dimorphic with the fertile frond longer. New spring growth is pinkish.



Blechnum watsii (Hard Water Fern) also found in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania.

A terrestrial, dimorphic fern with short to medium creeping rhizome which is wiry and much branched. This enables it to form large colonies. The fertile frond is much narrower than the sterile one which is dark green and leathery. New growth is bronze pink. It is found in wet open forest areas.

Blechnum vulcanicum (Wedge Water Fern) also found in Tasmania.

This fern is rare in Victoria being found in only one location but is common in Tasmania. The rhizome is erect forming a short trunk on old specimens. It is dimorphic with the sterile and fertile fronds being similar. The fronds are wedge shaped and new growth is very colourful. It is found in cool moist mountain areas often on rock faces.

Blechnum species King Island also found in Tasmania, South Australia, and including King Island.

This unnamed species resembles *B. watsii* but has longer stripes and the pinnae are narrower. It is dimorphic with the fertile frond narrower. New growth is bronze pink.

Other Blechnums found on Australian Mainland are:-

Blechnum ambiguum found in Queensland, and New South Wales.

This fern is similar to *B. watsii* but more pendulous. The fertile and sterile fronds are similar. It is a small fern with pale green fronds which grows on wet sand stone rock and it frequently found in caves.

Blechnum articulatum found in North East Queensland.

A tall terrestrial fern with an erect rhizome which can form a trunk. New growth has bright red fronds which age to shiny green. It is dimorphic with narrow fertile fronds. It is found in high altitude rain forests.

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MAY RAFFLE WINNERS:

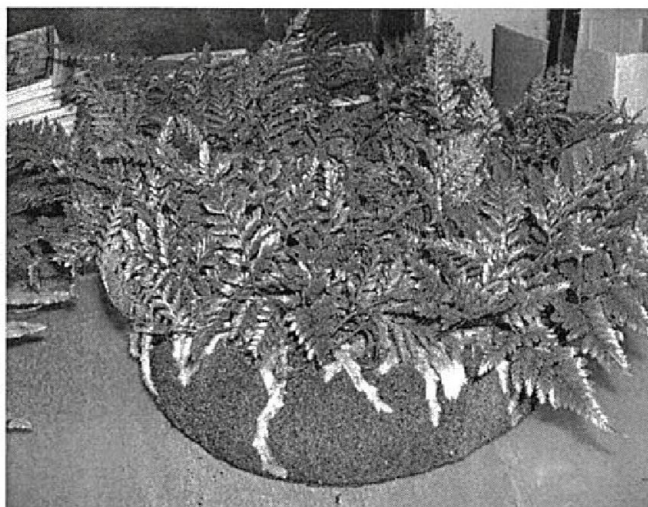
Ken Hall x 2
Bob Sayers
Margaret Radley
Diana Mayne x 2
Norma Hodges

3rd Norma Hodges
Polypodium fallax



COMPETITION WINNERS:

1st Don Fuller
Humatta tasmanii



2nd Milton Edwards
Cyathea cooperii "crested"



Cyathea dealbata

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Blechnum

Blechnum camfieldii found in South Queensland, and New South Wales.

A terrestrial dimorphic fern with tall erect fronds. The rhizome is erect and tufted forming a short thick trunk in old specimens. New fronds are bronze coloured and age to dark green. It is found in low lying swampy sites along the margins of saltwater rivers and lakes.



Blechnum gregsonii found in New South Wales.

A fern very similar to *B.ambiguum*. The fertile and sterile fronds are pendulous and very similar. The rhizome is short creeping. It grows on wet sand stone rock faces in sheltered situations.

Blechnum indicum (Swamp Water Fern) found in Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and Northern Territory.

A tall terrestrial fern with similar fertile and sterile fronds. The rhizome is long creeping and much branched enabling it to form large colonies. It grows in wet places such as soaks near lakes and creeks in high light situations.

Blechnum orientale found in Queensland, Western Australia, and Northern Territory.

This fern has tall, erect shiny green fronds with both the fertile and sterile fronds very similar. A feature of this fern is that the lower pinnae of mature fronds are reduced to small round auricles. It is a fern of the tropics. The rhizome is bulky and tufted and forms a small trunk. It is found on road side cuttings in open wet forests.



Blechnum occidentale found in North East Queensland.

Also a fern of the tropics. It is considered to have naturalized in the Daintree River area. It is a terrestrial fern with similar fertile and sterile fronds.

Blechnum whelanii found in North East Queensland - Mt Bellender Ker

A fern with slender erect fronds. New fronds are bronze-pink ageing to dark green. The rhizome is slender, erect and tufted.

Blechnum wurunuran found in North East Queensland.

A terrestrial dimorphic fern which is similar to *B.wattsii*. The new fronds are bright red ageing to dark green. Found in mountain rainforests.

Blechnums endemic to Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands.

There are three blechnums found on Lord Howe Island which are not found on the mainland. All are found in the very moist cloud zone on the southern mountains.

Blechnum contiguum

A dimorphic climbing epiphytic fern generally found on tree trunks. The sterile fronds are 20-40cm long and 5-12cm wide. The fertile frond is much narrower.

Blechnum fullagarii

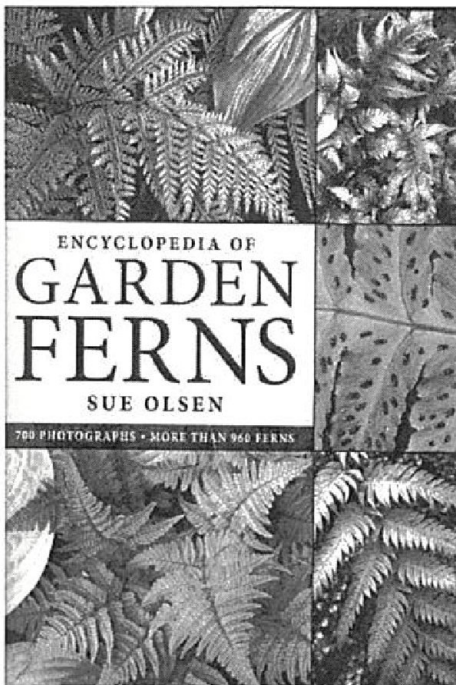
This fern is terrestrial or lithophytic with a short creeping to erect rhizome. It is dimorphic with the sterile fronds being 25-40cm long and 6-15cm wide. The fertile fronds are very narrow.

Blechnum howeanum

A moderately tall, dimorphic, terrestrial fern with a thick erect rhizome. The fertile fronds are longer and much narrower than the sterile fronds.

NEW FERN BOOK

Sue Olsen operates a fern nursery "Foliage Gardens" in Washington State. She has now written "Encyclopedia of Garden Ferns", published by Timber Press and just released this year.



This very informative book has 444 pages and is written in an easy style with a large number of good quality colour photographs. The opening pages feature a series of photos illustrating the beauty of ferns throughout the four seasons. The book has a number of sections on the cultivation of ferns under different conditions, and useful information on various methods of propagating ferns. The bulk of the book is devoted to an alphabetical description of individual genera. The information covers description, range and habitat, and culture conditions for the more commonly cultivated species in each genus, with shorter notes on other species, over 960 in total with about 700 coloured photographs.

The book can be obtained from Amazon for a cost including postage of about \$62 Australian.



Left marattia

Below Osmundas

Below left Nephrolepis falcate
(found growing in Fiji)



JUNE RAFFLE WINNERS:

Norma Hodges
Margaret Radley
Reg Orr
Lyle Timms

=3rd *Scyphularia pentaphylla*
Don Fuller

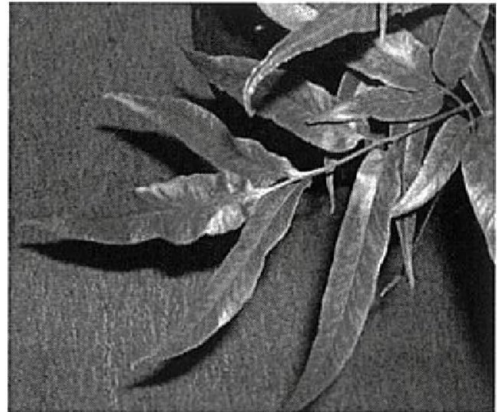


COMPITION WINNERS:

1st *Pyrrossia serrated*
Don Fuller



=3rd *Coniogramme japonica*
John Hodges



2nd *Pseudrynaria cronans*
Don Fuller



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Blechnum

There is only one blechnum fern on Norfolk Island:-

Blechnum norfolkianum

It is a large attractive fern similar to *B. chambersii* but much larger and with more pointed pinnae.

OTHER COMMON BLECHNUMS

Blechnum brasiliense (Brazilian Tree Fern)

A large terrestrial fern from Brazil and Peru. It has an erect rhizome which forms a tall trunk with age. New fronds are colourful being reddish bronze. It grows in tropical jungles and swamps but grows well in Melbourne with a little protection. It must be kept moist.

Blechnum discolor (Crown Fern)

This fern from New Zealand is dimorphic and has an erect rhizome which can form a short trunk with time. Sterile fronds are erect, long and narrow, bright green above and whitish below. Fertile frond is much narrower. It grows in wet boggy areas and forms large colonies.

Blechnum filiforme (Thread Fern)

This endemic fern to New Zealand is a small fern which creeps over the ground and up trees. The fronds on the ground are small, roundish and sterile. The climbing fronds become long, narrower, pendulous and can become fertile. Grows best in a cool moist position.

Blechnum spicant (Ladder Fern)

This fern is a small, dimorphic, tufted fern from the northern hemisphere where it grows in cool, acidic soils and bogs. The sterile fronds lie almost flat but the fertile fronds grow upright and are taller and narrower. There are a number of crested cultivars of this fern.

Blechnum gibbum

Blechnum moorie

Two similar ferns from New Caledonia and several other Pacific Islands. Both have erect rhizomes which form small trunks over time. Fronds are erect, long and narrow. They require some protection in Melbourne.

There is currently on sale a cultivar similar to these ferns called *Blechnum cv. Silver Lady*.



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