

*Adiantum pedatum*

[Synonyms : *Adiantum aleuticum*]

**AMERICAN MAIDENHAIR FERN** is a semi-evergreen fern. Native to North America it has glossy dark brownish-black stems and green leaflets.

It is also known as Canada maidenhair, Fern, Five-fingered maidenhair fern, Five-finger fern, *Frilandsadiantum* (Swedish), Hair fern, *Kujaku shida* (Japanese), Maiden fern, Maidenhair, North American maidenhair fern, Northern maidenhair fern, Rock fern, Sweet fern, and *Tarha-adiantumi* (Finnish).

*Pedatum* is Latin (foot) meaning 'like a bird's foot' with reference to the appearance of the fronds.

For ceremonial dances participating North American Hesquiat Indians (and those in the Nitinaht tribe as well) took an infusion which contained dried frond ash not only to make them light of foot but also to enhance their strength and endurance, particularly in Winter. They also chewed the green fronds to achieve the same ends.

The dark stems were woven by the Maidu, Karok and Makah Indians into basketry designs. While the Pomo tribe used a piece of stem as a keeper to hold a newly pierced earlobe hole open until the skin had healed.

The Potawatomi Indians believed that the black stems would bring them luck when hunting. The North American Indians relied on American maidenhair fern for treating various medical conditions. The Costanoan and Makah tribes used the plant to treat some stomach upsets, the Cherokee Indians used the whole plant, powdered leaves or the root for treating various ailments including rheumatism, some heart disorders, fever and asthma. It was prescribed by the Menominee as a remedy for dysentery and some female problems, and the Potawatomi tribe gave an infusion of root for some disorders faced by nursing mothers.

Medicinally, today in the West its uses are mainly in treatments for chest disorders.