

*Polypodium vulgare*

[Synonyms : *Ctenopteris vulgaris*, *Polypodium virginianum*, *Polypodium vulgare* subsp. *issaevii*]

**POLYPODY** is an evergreen fern. Native to western Asia and to Europe it has leathery green fronds.

It is also known as Adder's fern, *Bisfaij* (Urdu), Brake fern, Brake rock, Brake root, Common polypody, Eastern polypody, *Engelsüss* (German), Ever fern, Female fern, *Ferigă* (Rumanian), Fern, Fern brake, Fern root, *Fougère douce* (French), *Gemeiner Tüpfelfarn* (German), Golden locks, Golden maidenhair fern, *Grand capillaire* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Kallioimarre* (Finnish), Lady's milk, Mountain licorice, Oak fern, *Osladič obecný* (Czech), Polypody of the oak, Polypody root, *Réglisse des bois* (French), Rock brake, Rock polypody, *Sladič obyčajný* (Slovak), *Stensöta* (Swedish), Stone brake, Sweet fern, Wall fern, and Wood liquorice.

Warning – a skin rash can appear after polypody has been consumed but it seems to be harmless and will disappear after a short time.

*Vulgare* means 'common'.

The ancient Greeks used the underground stem when they treated sprained or fractured fingers. In Britain there was a period lasting for several centuries when it was believed that polypody growing upon oak roots (*Quercus*) was endowed with especial powers. And if the seeds (spores) were carried upon one's person they endowed that body with invisibility.

Some of the North American Salish Indians ate the underground stems both raw and sun-dried (the latter as Winter food). Records also note that the tribe had even used them as an alternative to a sweetener.

Several Indian tribes also respected the plant's medicinal qualities. It was used by the Malecite and Micmac Indians for treating pleurisy. Some of the Cree used it to treat tuberculosis, and the Klallam, Makah, Quinault, Green River Group and some of the Skagit Indian tribes all prescribed it as a cough remedy. Cowichan and Saanich Indians all took it for easing colds. They and the Bella Coola tribe used it to treat sore throats, and Micmac Indians turned to it as a cure for fluid retention. It was a laxative for some of the Skagit tribe, and the Iroquois included it as an ingredient in a compound taken for cholera. While it was a remedy for stomach upsets among the Cowichan, Bella Coola, Abnaki and Saanich tribes, it also offered a treatment for heart disease for some of the Algonkin. It was turned to by the Cowlitz Indians for treating measles, and was applied to wounds by the Cherokee Indian tribe.

Medicinally, herbalists used polypody in the treatment of various chest disorders. It was recommended additionally as a remedy for loss of appetite, tuberculosis, jaundice, fluid retention, scurvy, intestinal worms, rheumatism and skin diseases. Today (although it is rarely used) any of its benefits are considered to be most appropriate as remedies for coughs, respiratory disorders, loss of appetite and skin diseases.