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Polystichum acrosticoides

[Synonyms : *Aspidium acrosticoides*, *Nephrodium acrostichoides*, *Polystichum acrostichoides* var. *acrostichoides*, *Polystichum acrostichoides* var. *schweinitzii*]

CHRISTMAS FERN is an evergreen fern. Native to eastern North America it has short arching, glossy dark green fronds.

It is also known as Dagger fern, Eastern swordfern, Holly fern, and North American Christmas fern.

In the United States Christmas fern has been declared a threatened species in Minnesota and is the subject of cautious warning from over harvesting in the state of New York.

Acrosticoides is made up of the genus name *Acrostichum* and Greek *-oides* (like) components meaning ‘like ferns in that genus’.

North American Cherokee Indians picked the fiddleheads for food.

The fern was the source of medicine for several native Indian tribes. Iroquois Indians used it to treat diarrhoea, some female problems, convulsions in children, tuberculosis, blood disorders and venereal disease. They also gave it to children as a stimulant. Cherokee Indians turned to it for a remedy for stomach upsets, pneumonia and toothache. Both tribes chose it for treating rheumatism and fever – but for the latter the Iroquois tended to prescribe it for their children. Malecite, Micmac and Iroquois Indians all used as a remedy for hoarseness.

This fern is cultivated as an ornamental plant (and some experts suggest that it could also help to counter soil erosion).

The fronds are widely used today in Christmas decorations and have also been included in flower arrangements.