

JR FACT FILE



TREE FERNS

Cyathea australis (Rough Tree Fern)

Dicksonia antarctica (Soft Tree Fern)



What is a Tree Fern?

The Rough Tree Fern can grow over 12 metres tall. They are the most common tree fern and can tolerate higher exposure to the sun than their relative the Soft Tree Fern.

The Rough Tree Fern is named after its trunk which is covered with pointed tubercles, making it rough to touch. The fronds also have a sharp texture on the base of the stems. The fronds are popular with Lyrebirds and possums, often nesting in the centre of the crown. The unrolling new fronds are a delicacy enjoyed by rosellas and possums.

The Soft Tree Fern can develop a large trunk, over 15 metres tall, reaching higher heights than the Rough Tree Fern. The trunk is covered in brown fibrous roots. Smooth frond stems with soft brown hairs sprout from the top of the trunk. The fronds can grow up to 2 metres long.

Soft Tree Ferns thrive in filtered sunlight, loose well drained soils with lots of organic matter and plenty of water. Tree ferns growing under dense canopies in forest gullies often have bent trunks from earlier impacts of fallen trees and limbs from the upper canopy. Epiphytic (plants that grow on other plants, relying on them for support but not for nutrients) ferns grow on the trunks of the Soft Tree Fern.

Unlike many Australian plants, tree ferns don't respond well to fire, therefore they are only found in older bush areas like rainforests which rarely burns.

Habitat

Both species of tree fern are found throughout eastern Australia in cool moist, shady locations in bushland and rainforests, particularly near streams and waterfalls. They love the dappled light created by a tree canopy or larger shrubs.

Where to see Tree Ferns in Victoria's parks?

The Great Otway, Dandenong Ranges, Yarra Ranges and Tarra Bulga National Parks are great areas to view rainforest environments including some amazing tree ferns.

Want to know more?

www.anbg.gov.au/gardens/plantinfo

FASCINATING FACT

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ROASTED STALKS OF THE SOFT TREE FERN FOR FOOD.