



Calusa Garden Club of Marco Island

How to Grow and Care for Staghorn Ferns

Staghorn Ferns are really interesting plants with beautiful, unique fronds. For good staghorn fern care and growth, you need to make sure that you mimic the tropical conditions at your home by providing the needed amount of indirect sunlight along with moisture and humidity. Your plant will grow into a beautiful masterpiece if you take care of its growing requirements.



- **Soil:** In the beginning, you may receive your fern in soil, but you will eventually need to mount the plant when it is matured. Staghorn ferns are epiphytes; they grow on the sides of trees in nature. You need to provide these same conditions in your home or outdoors for optimum growth. For mounting the plant, you need to have some peat, compost, moss or other organic material such as coconut husk fiber that can be used as the base of the plant.
- **Water:** For best results, staghorn ferns need very frequent watering in summer - about once a week - and once every two-three weeks in the winter. Make sure there is enough time between waterings for the base to dry out. An easy way to water is to take the plant off of the mounting and soak it in a sink for at least 15 to 20 minutes. Let the plant drip dry and then put it back on its mounting. Depending on how it is mounted, if there is a space that acts as a well or depression, water near the top until the water is absorbed. In between waterings, you can mist it or spritz it with water.
- **Light:** In tropical conditions, the plant is grown clinging to the trees. The tree leaves block out most of the direct sunlight, so you have to provide as close to that same condition in your home. The most effective light conditions in a home are near a window where no direct sun rays hit the plant, or behind a filtered curtain. You can also use artificial light. The fern enjoys the warmth of the sun but cannot take direct sunlight.
- **Temperature:** The staghorn fern can grow very well in normal household conditions. Just remember that the plant belongs in a tropical climate where it grows very well between 100 degrees Fahrenheit and 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Provide similar temperatures at home for good growth of the plant.
- **Humidity:** The tropical forest area is humid and the staghorn fern loves humidity. You can mimic the humid conditions at home by placing the plant in or near the bathroom or the kitchen. If you want to keep it near the window and your plant is not getting enough humidity, you can use a humidifier.
- **Fertilizer:** For better growth of your staghorn fern, you can use a well-balanced and water-soluble fertilizer once a month during the spring and summer when the plant experiences good growth. Then slow down the frequency of fertilizer during the winter when the plant growth slows down.

Staghorn Fern Propagation

The process of staghorn fern propagation can be achieved through spore or division. The most common way to propagate the plant is by dividing a large mature staghorn fern into small chunks, which may include some leaves and some root balls. You need to make sure that you provide a moist and warm

atmosphere where the cuttings can grow independently. Your newly made plant will take a little while to grow, so do not get disheartened if your plant doesn't grow quickly.

If you are growing the plant from spores, it may take around three to six months for the spores to germinate in soil. Once you see plant growth, with some real leaves, you may transplant the small plants to small containers for staghorn ferns or mount them on a tree with Spanish moss or coconut fiber between the fern and the tree.

What are Staghorn Fern Pups?

Staghorn fern pups are little plantlets that can grow into fully grown plants one day. They are attached to the lower side of the plant under the dry shields. You can detach the pups to propagate the plant, and most propagation of staghorn ferns is done this way. Remove the pups by using a sharp knife to cut along the brown shield including the roots attached to that part of the shield. Then pot that cutting in a separate container or mount it to a backing such as a palm frond, piece of wood, or tree.

How to Mount Staghorn Fern

For staghorn fern mounting you can use a variety of methods: use a basket to mount it on the wall, mount it to a tree, mount it to a piece of wood; put it in a pot that can take the weight of the plants when hung or mounted. You need to make sure that the plant is protected and the mount is secure. Just make sure that the plant receives an adequate amount of warmth, humidity and water at the mounting place for good growth.

Why is a Staghorn Fern So Expensive?

Staghorn fern is a rare plant species and requires a good amount of care for good growth. They are big, beautiful plants, but you need to take care of their growth requirements like favorable temperature, humidity and fertilizer during the growth period.

Frequently Asked Questions



Q1: How much sun does a staghorn fern need?

They need bright but indirect light of the sun. Avoid the direct sun rays as they can destroy the foliage.

Q2: Are banana peels good for staghorn ferns?

A few banana peels are a good source of potassium and phosphorus for the staghorn fern. They may be dried or fresh, but don't let them rot on the plant.

Q3: How do you remove staghorn fern pups?

Wait for the pup to be at least 4 inches across and then use a sharp knife to cut it away from the spot where brown shield fronds are attached, and be sure to include the roots with the shield.

Q4: What's the best fertilizer for staghorn ferns?

Use a water-soluble and balanced fertilizer during the growing period once a month. Use fertilizer sparingly during the winter when the plant growth slows down.