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## Florida Ferns for Floral Arrangements

### Florida's Fern Industry

Florida's cut foliage industry started near the turn of the 20th century, when growers of fern asparagus started shipping iced fern sprays by train to florists in the Northeast.

By the 1920s, the City of Apopka adopted the slogan of "The Fern City." Growers sold millions of ferns to dime-store chains, which soon asked for other plants to sell also, launching the foliage industry. By the 1950s, there were over 2,000 acres of cut foliage production in Florida, most in Volusia County, with fern asparagus being the predominant crop. By the 1980s, production acreage had increased to over 3,300 acres, with more than 90 percent of the acreage devoted to leatherleaf fern.

Volusia County continues as the leading producer, followed by Putnam and Lake counties.

Florida is the national leader in sales of domestic cut cultivated greens, producing three-fourths of the value of all cut greens sold.



<http://florida-agriculture.com/consumers/crops/ferns/>

# Florida Ferns for Floral Arrangements

## Types of Ferns and Decorative Greens

| Common Name | Botanical Name |
|-------------|----------------|
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| <a href="#">Plumosus Fern</a> |
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| Asparagus setaceus |
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| <a href="#">Tree Fern</a> |
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| <a href="#">Tiki Fern</a> |
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| Asparagus virgatu |
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| <a href="#">Sprengeri Fern</a> |
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| Asparagus densiflorus |
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| <a href="#">Sword Fern</a> |
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| Nephrolepis exaltata |
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| <a href="#">Aspidistra</a> |
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| <a href="#">Cast-iron plant</a> |
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| Aspidistra elatior "Lurida" |
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| Aspidistra elatior "Variegata" |
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| Aspidistra elatior "Minor" |
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| Aspidistra elatior "Milky Way" |
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| <a href="#">Podocarpus</a> |
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| Podocarpus macrophyllus |
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| <a href="#">Foxtail</a> |
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| <a href="#">Myerii</a> |
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| <a href="#">Myers Fern</a> |
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| Asparagus densiflorus "Myers" |
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| <a href="#">Ming Fern</a> |
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| Asparagus macowanii |
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| <a href="#">Palmetto Fan</a> |
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| <a href="#">Palm Fans</a> |
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| Serenoa repens |
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| <a href="#">Variegated Pittosporum</a> |
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| Pittosporum tobira "Variegata" |
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| <a href="#">Umbrella Plant</a> |
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| <a href="#">Umbrella Palm</a> |
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| Cyperus alternifolius |
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| <a href="#">Spanish Moss</a> |
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| Tillandsia usneoides |
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| <a href="#">Leatherleaf Fern</a> |
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| <a href="#">Leather Fern</a> |
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| Rumohra adiantiformis |
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| <a href="#">Green Ivy</a> |
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| Hedera helix |
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## **Plumosus Fern**

### Botanical Name

*Asparagus setaceus* (Liliaceae Family)

### Description

16-24 inch long climber with lacy, rich green needle-like branchlets. The feathery foliage is horizontally aligned on a thin, wiry stem.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

7 - 10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Foliage should appear shiny and free of yellow or brown coloring. Avoid dehydrated products.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut 1 inch from stems base. Shake foliage lightly to reshape after shipping. Place stems in 2-3 inch deep water. Mist foliage and store in a cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Soft and feathery foliage is perfect to decorate wedding cakes. Use long pieces as cascading focal points in large designs. Excellent for garlands, weddings and funeral work. Popular in Victorian themes.



## Sprenger Fern

### Botanical Name

*Asparagus densiflorus* (Liliaceae Family)

### Description

2-3 feet long. Strong stem supports fluffy branchlets with soft green needles.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

7 - 10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Foliage should be light green but not yellowed. Red berries may be present at certain times of the year. Base of stem is white.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one inch from stems base. Place in tepid water 2-3 inches deep. Mist foliage and store in a cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Great for garlands, swags or wreaths. Natural red berries highlight foliage. Terrific in large arrangements as cascading filler at base. Very popular in funeral work.



## Aspidistra, Cast-Iron Plant

### Botanical Name

Aspidistra elatior "Lurida," Aspidistra elatior "Variegata," Aspidistra elatior "Minor," Aspidistra elatior "Milky Way" (Liliaceae Family)

### Description

A large, lance-shaped (lanceolate) leaf with a heavy midrib. Overall size varies by cultivar but averages 15-18 inches long and 3- 6 inches wide. Colors also vary, with the most common sold being green, a variegated green/white, and the yellow speckling against the green leaf.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

12 - 16 days

### Purchasing Hints

Leaf tips and edges should be free from browning or yellowing. Overall leaf surface should be glossy and damage-free.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one inch from stems base. Place stems in 2-3 inches of tepid water. Condition at room temperature for an hour and then place in a 36 degree F cooler.

### Design Tips

Excellent foliage for tropical and large arrangements. Use as background foliage, roll into "ti roses" or cut into "tea-louvers." Double-cut the stems base into a "V" shape for easy insertion into floral foam.



## Ming Fern

### Botanical Name

*Asparagus macowanii* (Liliaceae Family)

### Description

A large ornamental, with slightly stiff woody branches covered by tufts of forest green small needle-like foliage.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

7-10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Foliage should be free from yellowing or browning. Stem should be gray-white.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one inch from stems base. Place stems in 2-3 inches of tepid water. Condition at room temperature for an hour and then place in a 36 degree F cooler.

### Design Tips

Excellent foliage for Ikebana and tropical designs. Slant-cut smaller pieces off larger branches to use as filler in designs. Very nice in wedding boutonniere. Great compliment to orchids.



## Variegated Pittosporum

### Botanical Name

*Asparagus macowanii* (Liliaceae Family)

### Description

A large ornamental, with slightly stiff woody branches covered

by tufts of forest green small needle-like foliage.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

7-10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Foliage should be free from yellowing or browning. Stem should be gray-white.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one inch from stems base. Place stems in 2-3 inches of tepid water. Condition at room temperature for an hour and then place in a 36 degree F cooler.

### Design Tips

Excellent foliage for Ikebana and tropical designs. Slant-cut smaller pieces off larger branches to use as filler in designs. Very nice in wedding boutonniere. Great compliment to orchids.



## **Umbrella Plant, Umbrella Palm**

### Botanical Name

*Cyperus alternifolius* (Cyperaceae Family)

### Description

2-4 feet long fibrous, green stem bearing a crown

of bright-green, grass-like leaves.

The leaf blades are 4-6 inches in length and about one-quarter to one-half inch wide.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

12-16 days

### Purchasing Hints

Leaves should be free of damage and have a shiny appearance. Some small flowers at the center of crown can be seen during some seasons.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties, then slant cut one inch from stems base. Place stems in 2-3 inches of tepid water. Use a container which is tall enough to help prevent the stems from breakage.

### Design Tips

Special order longer lengths for entertainment decorating. Great to use in theme floristry. Razor the crown's leaves into attractive angles or shapes. Slice into the stem (but do not sever) to create angles or geometric shapes with this foliage.



## **Tree Fern, Tiki Fern**

### Botanical Name

*Asparagus virgatus* (Liliaceae Family)

### Description

15-22 in length with dark-green needle-like foliage; bushy in appearance.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

7-10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Foliage should be moist; not wet or dry. Mature foliage is free of light green or yellowing needles.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one inch from stems base. Place in 2-3 inches of water. Do not add floral preservatives to water. Mist foliage and store in a cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Perfect for filler for all designs. Smaller pieces can be used in corsage and boutonniere work. Compliments garlands and swags.



## Sword Fern

### Botanical Name

*Nephrolepis exaltata* (Polypodiaceae Family)

### Description

Simply pinnate with rather stiff, fresh green fronds. Length is 12-16 inches wide.

### Seasonal Availability

Spring through Fall

### Vase Life

7-10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Should be packaged flatly with leaves intact. Stems should be stiff.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one inch from stems base. If you need to remove some of lower leaves they can be stripped easily. Place stems in 2-3 inches of water. Do not add any floral preservative to water. Support long foliage with a tall container. Store in a cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Great foliage for tropical designs and bouquets. Gives vertical accent to designs.



## Podocarpus

### Botanical Name

Podocarpus macrophyllus  
(Podocarpaceae Family)

### Description

Woody ornamental with deep green, needle-like leaves 2-3 inches in length. Overall length is 16- 24 inches long.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

7-10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Leaves should be dark green and shiny in appearance and also free from black spots or black powder.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant-cut one-quarter inch from stems base. Place stems in 2-3 inches of water. Store in cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Nice filler for large arrangements. Covers mechanics like floral foam or frogs nicely and can be spray painted for added decoration.



## **Foxtail, Myerii, Myers Fern**

### Botanical Name

*Asparagus densiflorus*  
"Myers" (Liliaceae Family)

### Description

Strong central stem with dark green, dense needle-like foliage. Length is 18-24 inches.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

6-10 days

### Purchasing Hints

Each spray should be moist. Needle-like leaves should be free of yellow coloring.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one-quarter inch from stems base. Lower leaves can be removed easily by stripping. Place stems in 2-3 inches of water. Support long foliage in a tall container. Store in a cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Excellent for vertical accents in large arrangement. Bend easily in creative shapes and secure with floral tape or pins. Spray paint foliage for color themes and unique designs.



## Palmetto Fan, Palm Fans

### Botanical Name

*Serenoa repens* (Palmae Family)

### Description

Strong stem extends several inches into base of leaf. Soft, leathery fronds are rounded in outline and are about 18-24 inches wide. The frond is divided to middle into narrow, glossy fresh-green segments.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

10-14 days

### Purchasing Hints

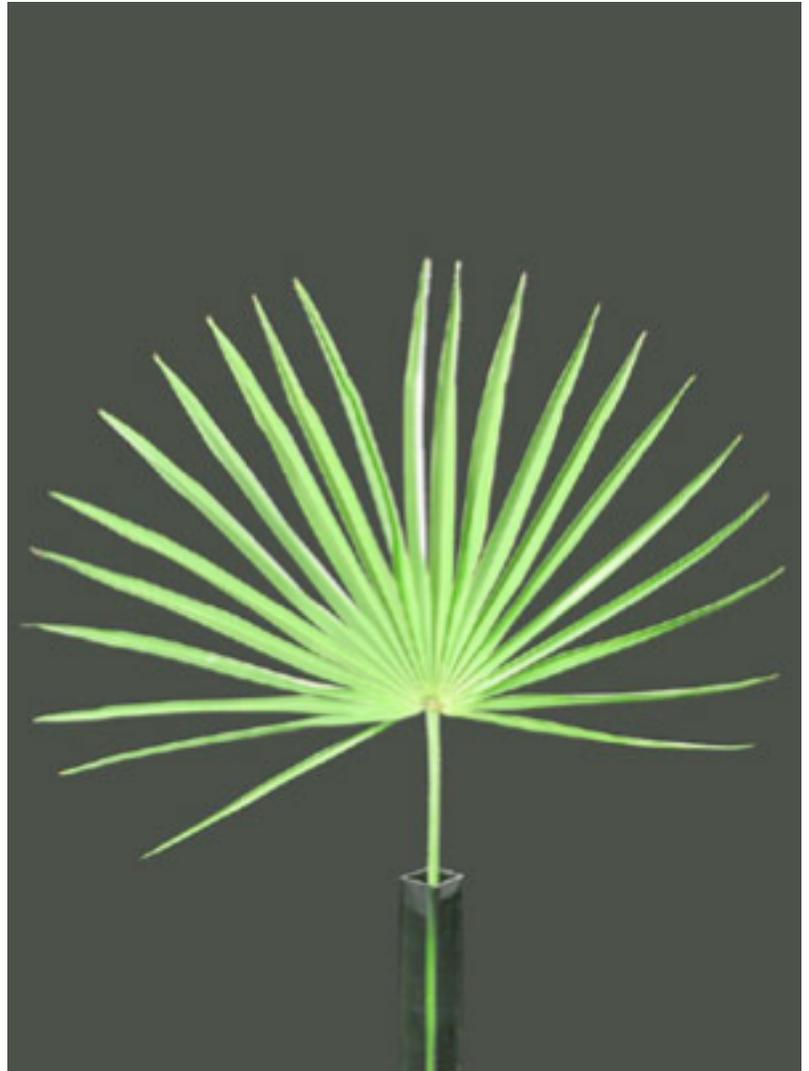
Fans should be free of brown tips or torn leaves. Appearance should be erect, glossy and hydrated.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant cut one inch from stems base. Place stems in 2- 3 inches of water. Store in cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Excellent foliage for background in large arrangements and funeral pieces. Razor the "fingers" of fronds for creative outline shapes. Great in Ikebana and Tropical designs.



## Spanish Moss

### Botanical Name

*Tillandsia usneoides* (Bromeliaceae Family)

### Description

Silver-gray threadlike masses. Packaged in one-pound mesh bags.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

10-14 days

### Purchasing Hints

Moss can be moist or dry packaged. However, it should not be soaking wet, as it will rot. Color should be silver-gray to light green.

### Care and Handling

Remove individual bags from shipping container and store at room temperature in a well-ventilated place, preferably hanging in net.

### Design Tips

Excellent to hide mechanics of arrangements. Adds natural look to potted plants while preventing dehydration of top soil.



## Green Ivy

### Botanical Name

*Hedera helix* (Araliaceae Family)

### Description

18-24 inch long woody stem with self branching variably-shaped leaves. Leaves are green and are somewhat cupped.

### Seasonal Availability

Year-round

### Vase Life

10-14 days

### Purchasing Hints

Leaves should be free of brown edges. Foliage should be glossy and hydrated.

### Care and Handling

Remove bundle ties and slant-cut 1 inch from stems base. Immerse entire plant in cool water and remove. Place stems in 2-3 inches of water. Store in a cooler at 36 degrees F.

### Design Tips

Cover floral foam figures to create fresh topiaries. Beautiful in wedding garlands and swags. Decorate cakes or garnish food trays. For best results, slant cut ends sharply for easy insertion into floral foam.

