

### **Dicksonia antarctica**

This evergreen 'soft tree fern' has large fronds and a dark brown trunk – slow growing to 3m/10ft or more. It should be planted in a moisture retentive soil in a cool shaded position out of strong winds.

Larger specimens are able to stand temperatures as low as -10°C but in very cold areas the crown should be protected with a mulch of bracken or straw. It can also be grown in a cool shaded conservatory. It should be watered freely, especially in warm weather.

### **Dicksonia fibrosa**

One of the hardiest tree ferns – a slow growing variety with a thick gold-brown fibrous trunk. It displays spreading fern-like, light green fronds, with a height in the region of 2.5m/8.2ft after many years.

A splendid architectural specimen plant which can be grown in a large container or in the ground in a cool sheltered shady site. Alternatively grow in a conservatory protected from bright sunlight. It should be watered freely, especially in warm weather, and has proven hardy to -9°C in the UK. It is one of the best varieties for full sun, and should be provided with plenty of moisture.

### **Dicksonia squarrosa**

This slow growing, pretty rare variety has large, bushy fern fronds on a stout fibrous black trunk, eventually reaching to a height in the region of 3m/9.8ft. It is ideal in tubs and pots in a good peaty compost, and adds a lovely exotic flavour to the garden.

It should be planted in a cool, sheltered, shady position in moist peat-soil. An excellent tree for a water-side or woodland site, it should be able to withstand temperatures as low as -5°C. Be sure to water freely, especially during warm weather.

### **Further Information**

Please note that this information is only intended as a guide – put together from our knowledge and experience.

It should be noted, that on occasion, a plant or tree can thrive in one situation but struggle under almost identical conditions. Like us, plants are living individuals – all different and unique. They should therefore be treated as such.

One of the best bits of advice we can give you however, is to have a look at your neighbour's garden and see what they are growing. You are likely to be able to enjoy the same in your own garden.

### **Did you know?**

Only the top foot or so of the Dicksonia antarctica is truly alive, making it particularly important to liquid feed and water near the top of the trunk / in the crown, with this variety. The remainder of the trunk is there mainly to support anchorage roots.

For more information get in touch with us, and we'll do our best to help and advise you.

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## **Australian Tree Ferns**

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## Background

Dicksonia tree ferns can be found in many areas of Australia, in their native habitat, and seem to be able to withstand harsh growing conditions at times.

Normally they are found growing in shady woodland environments, although they are able to tolerate a certain amount of sunshine if they have adequate water.

Our tree ferns have been salvaged from an approved land clearance site in SE Australia. They seem to be hardy in most parts of the UK, as long as they are given protection from very hard frosts (see 'Frost protection').

They are very slow growing with optimum trunk growth estimated to be around just 2–2.5cm a year.

## Dicksonia Care

### Soil

Tree ferns prefer a moist, organic soil with plenty of additional peat or leaf mould.

### Watering

A newly planted tree fern will need to be watered regularly – a thorough soaking two or three times a week during the summer is advisable, with over-watering difficult during these hotter months.

Ensuring the centre of the crown is watered is very important as this will promote the growth of new fronds. If you have any issues keeping up with watering, it may be worth investing in an automatic watering system, which can be set to come on at certain times throughout the day.

### Feeding

We recommend applying a high nitrogen liquid feed for tree ferns (diluted as recommended by the manufacturer) to the crown or trunk of the tree fern once a month during the growing season, after the first year of planting.

A foliar feed of seaweed based fertiliser once a month during the growing season will also help.

### Frost protection

In cold areas place leaf litter or straw in the crown of the plant to protect it or in severe conditions pack the crown with straw or dry leaves and wrap the head in fleece, hessian or similar.

If given this level of protection the tree should be comfortable down to anywhere between  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  depending on variety. We wouldn't recommend cutting the old fronds off until they look tatty.

## Planting Ideas

Traditionally a shade loving plant, Dicksonia tree ferns are great when planted with a variety of other shade lovers, including a number of ground ferns.

Planting in groups of assorted heights, creates a wonderful effect—from the tall trunk with impressive canopy, to the smaller, trunk lacking fern that provides great ground cover.

The tree fern looks very at home next to water, such as a garden pond, although can create an equally rewarding long term impression as a specimen plant in a garden border.

