

Royal fern

Osmunda regalis

Family

Osmundaceae (royal fern)

Where is it originally from?

Europe, West Asia, India, Africa, America.

What does it look like?

Terrestrial, deciduous fern with short, woody trunk (<1.5 m tall, <1+ m diameter). covered in persistent stalk bases. Yellow-brown leaf stalks have ear-like lobes at base and large, tough, leathery, yellow-green fronds (30-300 x 20-75 cm) divided twice with primary leaflets (pinnae) (up to 30 cm long) and secondary leaflets (20-70 x 8-18 mm), in up to 15 pairs. Inner fronds often have fertile secondary pinnae at their ends (each 30 x 4 mm), densely covered with clusters of light brown spore bodies.

Why is it weedy?

Tolerates frost, wet, moderate shade, poor and acidic soils.

How does it spread?

Spores are widely distributed by wind.

What damage does it do?

One of the very few weeds of bogs, royal fern competes with native species for space in specialised niches.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Wetlands, swamps, streamsides, and damp bare (especially acidic) land.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Dig out (all year round). Dry the rootstock and mulch.
2. Spray (spring-summer): metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (3g/10L).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Bared areas occasionally re-establish. Check for new plants annually.



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Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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