



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet

Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/maidenhair-fern-adiantum-pedatum/

By colliiek2

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Delicate, shiny dark stem, palmate leaf whorl of five, frilly leaflets that are water repellant.



Maidenhair fern (courtesy Robert H. Mohlenbrock)

What a spiffy little fern! Maidenhair fern species live in tropical, sub-tropical, and many temperate zones. This includes Asia, Andes Mountains of South America, Pacific coast, and eastern North American forests.

More recently, you may also find this little fern in an office setting. This feat of careful devotion is almost painstaking for this moisture loving plant. Growing tips follow!

Environment

Like many ferns, Maidenhair require a relatively protected environment with constant moisture, moderate temperatures, and organically-rich and slightly acidic soils. Good drainage is imperative.

Good light is not. This plant grows well in partial to full shady places. Depending on the environment, direct sunlight will zap the plant quickly. Take note of where this plant occurs in nature (think steep, shady, and moist ravine bottoms) and try to mimic those conditions.

Medicine, Food, and More

China has 30 species of Maidenhair ferns. Five of these are used in traditional Chinese medicines. The species found on the Pacific coast and eastern American forests, *Adiantum pedatum*, also has a long and varied use history with native Americans as well.

Medical uses around the world for this plant has included bronchitis, whooping cough, chronic infections, hepatitis, snakebites, rheumatism, asthma, coughing, fevers, burns, and scalds. North Americans would chew the fronds and then apply them to wounds to stop bleeding.

Non-medical uses included: hair wash, conditioner, tonic, and growth extract. Stems were used in basketmaking.

The plant is edible. Fresh fronds have been used as garnish. Dried fronds have been used in a tea and in a refreshing fruit juice drink.

Maidenhair ferns are nontoxic.

A number of ferns contain carcinogens. Some caution when consuming any unusual plant is always advisable.

Landscaping

In some locales this clumping plant could be a wonderful landscape addition. Not only does it add great texture but in the right growing conditions can be fairly care-free.

The plant is great in a number of gardens such as woodland, fern, rock, and native. It may also be a delightful border option.

Cleanup is minimal for well-grown plants. Just pick off the old dried fronds. It is also disease and pest free, and can be easily propagated.

Inside

If you want to grow this in your office, consider using chemical (like chlorine, salt, and other water conditioners) free water that is tepid. Use a water mister several times a day, and make sure there is excellent drainage out of the pot. Use a water catchment tray with stones (to elevate the pot out of the water) is also a good bet.

Normally the plant would thrive in an organic-rich environment. In the office, it will need supplemental fertilizer on a regular basis.

REFERENCES:

- Smart Garden Guide (<https://smartgardenguide.com/maidenhair-fern-care/>)
- Wikipedia, Maidenhair fern (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adiantum_pedatum)
- Natural Medicinal Herbs (<http://www.naturalmedicinalherbs.net/herbs/a/adiantum-capillus-veneris=maidenhair-fern.php>)
- Philippine Medical Plants
(<http://www.stuartxchange.org/AmericanMaidenhairFern.html>)
- Missouri Botanical Gardens, Plant Finder
(<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=j200>)

Photo: Robert H. Mohlenbrock, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA NRCS. 1992. Western wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species. West Region, Sacramento.