The Growing Place
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Bird's Nest Fern

Asplenium nidus

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 5 feet

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 10b

Description:

Elegant, long, glossy fronds with dramatic black spines; best suited to moist shady areas that are warm and humid but is somewhat adaptable and makes a great potted plant for indoors; cannot divide this variety, propagated through spores or tissue culture

Ornamental Features

Bird's Nest Fern is primarily valued in the landscape or garden for its cascading habit of growth. Its attractive large glossy narrow leaves remain light green in color with pointy black spines throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Bird's Nest Fern is an herbaceous fern with a shapely form and gracefully arching fronds. Its relatively coarse texture can be used to stand it apart from other garden plants with finer foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and usually looks its best without pruning, although it will tolerate pruning. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Bird's Nest Fern is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Bird's Nest Fern
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Bird's Nest Fern foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Bird's Nest Fern will grow to be about 5 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 5 feet. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant does best in partial shade to shade. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution, and will benefit from being planted in a relatively sheltered location. This species is not originally from North America.

Bird's Nest Fern is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden. Be aware that in our climate, this plant may be too tender to survive the winter if left outdoors in a container. Contact our experts for more information on how to protect it over the winter months.