

Onoclea sensibilis

Native to Maine

Sensitive Fern
Bead Fern

Upland
Forests, Waters edge, Swamps

Leaves



Flickr users myiarchus22 and sandy richard



Fertile (with spores) and sterile (without spores) fronds (leaves) grow on separate stems. Sterile fronds are light green with lobed leaflets. Fertile fronds have many bead structures that contain spores.

LEAF ARRANGEMENT	LEAF TYPE	LEAF/LEAFLET SHAPE	LEAF/LEAFLET EDGE
 ALTERNATE	 SIMPLE	 LOBED	 SMOOTH
 OPPOSITE	 COMPOUND-PALMATE	 OVAL	 TOOTHED
 ROSETTE	 COMPOUND-PINNATE	 ROUND	 WAVY

Plant



Flickr user cmoray1



Look for a fern (leafy plant that reproduces with spores) that is 45-60 cm tall, deciduous (loses leaves in fall), and perennial (living 3 or more years).

Stem



Flickr user Justin Tso



The sensitive fern has a long, yellowish to light green, smooth stalk. Stalks grow at intervals from a rhizome (horizontal stem beneath the soil surface).

Seasonal Change



Charles de Martigny & Tome Potterfield



Look for pale red fiddleheads in the spring. In late summer look for fertile fronds (leaves with spores), which remain after the sterile fronds die.

Similar Species

The sterile fronds (leaves without spores) of the sensitive fern and the netted chain fern look similar. Sensitive fern fronds are more deeply lobed than netted chain fern. Sensitive fern is more common in Maine.

Did You Know?

The sensitive fern was named by the early American settlers for the way that the plant responds to frost. The sterile fronds of the sensitive fern typically die at their first exposure to frost.