

NATIONAL PLANT COLLECTION®

***Polypodium* (Hardy cvs.)**

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HISTORY

The oldest named cultivar is *Polypodium cambricum* 'Richard Kayse' which dates back to at least 1668.

Could this be the oldest cultivated herbaceous plant?

The species records date back to at least 1491!

Polypodium has a long history and for many years the American and European species were all classed as *P. vulgare*. In the pivotal work by Irene Manton in 1947, the European ones were found to be three different species that occasionally produced three different hybrids. Since then the American ones have been split into many species.

HABIT & USES

The foliage of *Polypodium* has many different textures from simple to crested fronds, as well as very feathery two-dimensional fronds. There are many shades of green from dark to apple to blue-green and golden. They are brilliant as back drops for early spring plants especially snowdrops and aconites.

Polypodium are ideal for the front of winter flower beds, on rock gardens, on walls or even as winter hanging baskets! They are ideal to replace those summer baskets.

Just have two sets!

CULTIVATION

They are totally wintergreen taking severe frosts, still being green even after -17 °C! *Polypodium* do not like their spreading rhizomes buried. They need to be just on the surface of the ground and in a well-drained position. They will grow in sun or shade, but are more luxuriant with some shade.

Polypodium vulgare and its varieties prefer slightly acid conditions. The species is often found growing on hedge banks or on trees running through the moss and on walls. New fronds are produced in spring and are very adaptable.

Polypodium interjectum and its varieties are not so fussy on soil but the species grow in similar places to *P. vulgare* but lose fronds in late spring and come back into frond naturally in July or later if very dry.

Polypodium cambricum and its varieties like lime soils. The species is often found growing on old mortar walls and limestone rocks. It is very drought tolerant and will not come into leaf until it has had enough rain. Even as late as September or earlier if you put a sprinkler on, dare I say!

Very little feeding is required if the soil is well prepared beforehand, a good mulch of compost in spring is all that they need.

In pots a liquid feed of tomato food at half strength once a month from when growth starts until the end of August, then let the plants harden up for winter.

PROPAGATION

This is normally by division as it is the only way to make sure you keep them true to name.

P. vulgare types are best divided in spring.

P. interjectum and *P. cambricum* are best divided in August.

Replant them all so the rhizome is just on the surface of the soil or half buried.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Generally trouble free but like any plant it can get vine weevil also fern weevil. Treat as per vine weevil with a pesticide or nematodes for vine weevil.