

Kasey Hartz Natural Area Reference Sheet



Muskegon Community College

Osmunda cinnamomea

Cinnamon Fern

Osmundaceae (Royal fern family)

Blooming season:

No flower but plant emerges in spring.

Plant:

A perennial plant that actively grows from spring to fall.

Stipes are 10-20 cm long. They are pink to reddish brown with woolly hairs covering the stipe.

The average mature height can reach 1.5 m.

The rhizomes are ascending to creeping and form a large, vase like base. The minimum root depth is 30 cm.



Leaves:

Fronds appear as brownish-green fiddleheads covered with rusty wool in early spring.

The fronds are dimorphic.

The fertile fronds appear before the sterile fronds and look like a cinnamon stick, but are shorter than the sterile fronds. Oblong in shape; 15-45 cm long and 2-3 cm wide. 8-25 pairs of tripinnate, opposite oblong pinnae with groupings of brown sporangia.

Sterile fronds are green, bipinnate, and form around the fertile ones. Elliptic in shape, 3-12 dm long, 13-30 cm wide, and acute at the tip. 15-25 opposite pinnae that have a tuft of red brown hair at the base of the pinna.



Flower:

No flower.

Fruit:

No fruit, but sporangia form spores on the fertile fronds. They are a brown cinnamon color. The spores mature May to June.

Can be confused with:

Royal fern because fronds have similar shapes, come from the same family, and both are typically found in the same area.

Geographic range:

Type specimen location: Creek Bed Habitat.

State: Common throughout the whole of Michigan, but less common in the north.

Regional: Found abundantly from Labrador to Ontario, to Florida, Texas, Nebraska, and Minnesota.



Osmunda cinnamomea

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Cinnamon Fern

Habitat:

Local: Found in wet woods, swamps, and low grounds.

Regional: A terrestrial plant found in wet, moist places with acidic soil such as stream banks, swamps, and bogs. Prefers fine to medium coarse soils. Requires high moisture for use with a precipitation minimum of 102 cm and a maximum of 152 cm. Requires a pH between 4.5 and 7 (USDA-Plants Database).

Common local companions:

Royal fern, sensitive fern, spicebush, maples, mayapples and other wetland species.

Usages:

Human: Is cultivated in gardens (USDA-Plants Database). The fiddleheads are edible and may be eaten raw or cooked like asparagus (MacPherson 19-21). Used by the Cherokee for rheumatism, snakebite antidote, and for chills (Moerman 372). Also used by the Iroquois for joint pain and rheumatism, female cramps, and to treat venereal diseases. Eaten by Menominee hunters so as to have the same scent as deer that also ate the same plant so they would not scare the animals (Moerman 273).

Why is it called *that*?:

Osmunda comes from the name Osmund the waterman or the Anglo-Saxon god of thunder referring to the royal bearing of the entire family, and *cinnamomea* means brown referring to the brown cinnamon color of the fertile fronds (Gledhill).

Prepared by: Elizabeth LaRue April 2008