

Groundcedar

Diphasiastrum digitatum (Dill. ex A. Braun) Holub



Groundcedar is the most common and widespread clubmoss growing in eastern North America, covering large areas of land with monoclonal colonies. It can sometimes cover tens of acres at a time. It is a fast-growing, far-ranging, ground-hugging plant, so be prepared to keep it contained! However, it is a truly breathtaking groundcover. This species is hardy at least to southern zone 4.

This plant, a member of the primitive, spore-bearing lycophyte group (there are three groups of higher plants: seed plants, ferns and fern allies, and lycophytes), is the most tolerant and adaptable of the native clubmosses. It loves disturbed land, and is highly shade-tolerant. It seems to completely ignore soil pH.

This species, because it was widespread in areas where there was little else green at Christmas, was often used for Christmas decoration. The spores were also collected in large quantities to use as flashpowder in the days before electric flashbulbs. It can still create an effect by dropping a pinch into a flame.

To grow spore:

Clubmosses have brown, subterranean gametophytes which look nothing like fern gametophytes. I recommend direct-sowing these outside where you want them to grow. The gametophytes may live underground for several years before sprouting out into the new plant.