



Rattlesnake Fern

Botrypus virginianus

(L.) Michaux

The rattlesnake fern is part of a group collectively known as grape ferns. These are primitive ferns allied with the adders-tongues. These might even be considered as fern-allies rather than ferns.

This fern occurs throughout much of the world except for Africa and Australia. It is found in every state except California. It is a common fern in Ohio.

Like other grape ferns, the rattlesnake fern only sends up one frond per year. The spore stalk may or not be present.

An interesting aspect of this fern is that it includes mitochondria that are actually derived from a plant in the mistletoe family – an instance of jumping plastids, where a component of one plant species' cells becomes transferred to another species' cells. This is thought to have spurred the evolutionary success of this plant.

This fern thrives in disturbed soils, and will grow in most soils. It is, however, dependent on mycorrhizal fungi in the soil, but these are most often present. If transplanting, it's best to make sure to take a good shovelful of soil with it. This plant integrates well into a flower bed, or can be used as an accent in the midst of a low-growing groundcover.



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