

Kangaroo fern



An epiphytic fern, which means it grows on another plant without gaining nourishment from it. The fronds vary in shape, but some look like a kangaroo's footprint, giving the fern its name

Mother shield-fern



Grows in large colonies along the sides of tracks. Unlike tree-ferns they have no trunk, but grow in clumps. They produce baby ferns on the end of their fronds. When they are heavy enough, the babies bend the frond down to the ground and take root.

Baby fern growing on the tip of the fern frond



Austral bracken



Also growing on the side of the tracks is Austral bracken. Many people think it is a weed, but it is indigenous to this part of the world. It grows from rhizomes (roots) which spread and branch underground. A paddock full of bracken can be just one plant.

Filmy Ferns

These tiny delicate ferns can be seen growing on the trunks of tree-ferns, where there is constant moisture. Their fronds are rarely more than one cell thick and because of this they have a direct exchange of gases with the atmosphere. There are four species of filmy ferns found in the park: Common filmy-fern, Shiny filmy-fern, Veined bristle-fern and Austral filmy-fern. The differences between them are so small it helps to have an eye-glass to identify them.



Trunk of soft tree-fern covered in filmy-ferns

This brochure was produced by Friends of Mount Worth. Our sincere thanks go to Wendy Savage and members of the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists for their invaluable assistance.

Photos: Peter, Ware, Merrin Butler,

We wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging

Ferns seen around Giants Circuit at Mount Worth State Park



Soft tree-fern, *Dicksonia antarctica*. Its trunk is covered in many different smaller ferns.

Mount Worth has a wonderful diversity of ferns due to its permanently moist gullies. Ferns are ancient plants, predating the dinosaurs and flowering plants. They reproduce by spores rather than seed.

Enjoy a stroll around the Giants Circuit. Take your time and see how many of the ferns listed in this brochure you can find.

All indigenous plants in the park are protected by legislation. Please do not pick them or damage them in any way.

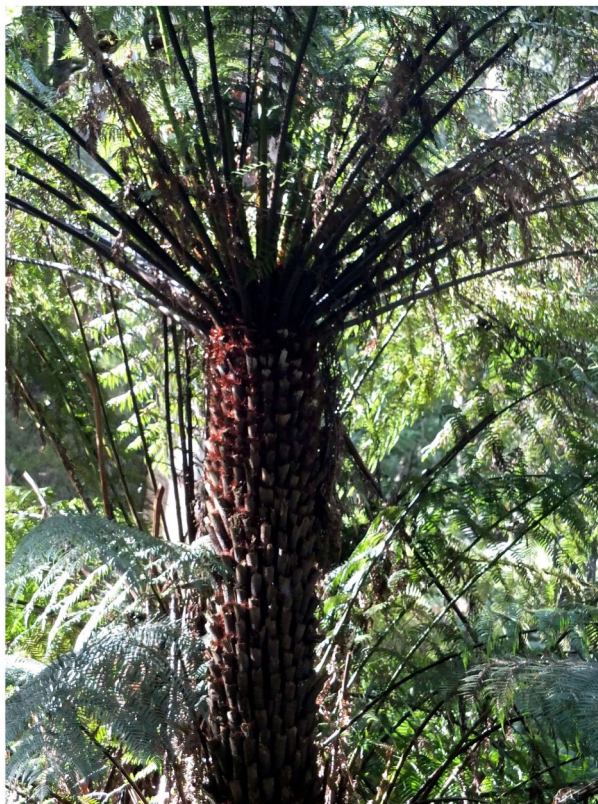


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Tree-ferns

The two most commonly seen are the **Soft tree-fern**, *Dicksonia antarctica*, (front cover) and the **Rough tree-fern**, *Cyathea australis*, (see below).



The trunk of the Rough tree-fern is covered with the bases of old fronds, which feel rough to touch,

In contrast, the trunk of the Soft tree-fern is covered in fine matted roots and the stem of the frond feels smooth to touch.

Tree-ferns grow slowly at a rate of 2.5 - 5 cm a year, although some can grow faster given good conditions. The tall tree-ferns you see around Giants Circuit may be hundreds of years old.



Batswing fern

This ground fern has tall, soft, pale green fronds. It gets its name from the lobes on the frond that look like a bat's wing



Fishbone water-fern



Commonly seen growing in clumps on the edge of creeks. Its fronds resemble the backbone of a fish.

Strap water-fern



Grows in clumps on low banks. Dark green fronds are shaped like a strap. Prefers more fertile, wetter parts of fern gullies.

Ray water-fern



Grows in shaded areas where there is plenty of moisture. The pinnae, or divided leaflets, in the frond have rounded tips.

Hard water-fern



Has coarse, dark-green fronds with veins clearly visible. Like some other water-ferns, it has separate fertile and infertile fronds. The fertile fronds are a different shape and are covered in sori containing spores.

Leathery shield-fern



An epiphytic fern often seen growing on the trunks of soft tree-ferns. The sori on the back of the frond are round. They are brown and become black when they mature.

Mother spleenwort



Can sometimes be seen growing on the same trunk as Leathery shield-ferns. They look similar but have key differences. The Mother spleenwort grows 'babies' on the end of the fronds which form roots when they meet a surface and grow a new plant. The other difference is the sori. The Mother spleenworts are long, like sausages, while the Leathery shield-fern's are round.