



September 2025

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<http://www.tgcfersoc.org>

Our meeting this month will be “blended” by meeting in-person at the Judson Robinson, Jr. Community Center (2020 Hermann Dr., Houston, 77004) and/or via *GoToMeeting* – member’s choice.

TGCFS MISSION STATEMENT

Organized in 1998 by a group of fern enthusiasts (a.k.a. fern lovers, fernies, pteridologists), to cultivate, foster, and promote interest in ferns and fern allies, the TGC Fern Society presents educational programs including “how to” sessions, presentations by local, national and internationally known fern experts, and field trips and tours-thus providing a forum for fern enthusiasts to visit, learn, share plants, ideas, information, and have a good time. A very informative monthly newsletter is published for members, and special events include presentations to other groups, fundraiser events, and a year-end holiday season party. **Doors open at 1:30pm and regular meetings begin at 2:00pm on the 3rd Sunday of each month at the Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Herman Drive, Houston, TX, 77004. (713) 284-1994.**

A message from our President:

Hi Everyone,

Thank you for attending the meeting in August I hope everyone enjoyed seeing the Staghorns we brought in for the giant four, superbum, grande, wandae, and holtumii. Sometimes seeing them in person makes you want to give a new fern a try. If you missed it, there are four photos later in the newsletter you can look at, with me for scale on the size. Keep in mind these are mostly not full-grown yet.

This month’s meeting is building a fern birdbath. Ceil will present this, and you know she will have all the supplies ready to go. So, come to get messy and take a cool birdbath home with you.

Next month’s meeting will be on our garden ferns here in the Houston area, so what needs protected for winter and who’s good to go. Will bring examples so if you don’t know the name of your plant you can recognize it and know what to do. You might get some new ideas on what works in our yards here, that the local nurseries don’t typically carry. Look at the calendar for the rest of the year programs.

I would like to thank Ruby Adams for taking on the Membership chair roll. She has stepped up to do this before and we really appreciate her willingness to help out when the society needs her!!! Thank you, Ruby!!

I would all so like to thank Diane Hudnull for taking on our Society Membership Booklet. It’s been a while since we got one published for various reason. We are trying to get this done as accurately as possible, so don’t be surprised to get a phone call, text, or an email, to

double-check information. Over the last couple of years our membership has dropped off and we are trying to see if some of our older members would like to rejoin and to do that easy; also, if you know someone that has joined, but has not received their newsletter please let me know and their contact information. That will be a big help. Please help us out with a response to the questions in the email.

We have been invited to join the Houston Garden Club again this year for their annule sale. The **Bulb and Plant Mart sale is Oct 10-11 this year** for the membership booth at the **Church of St. John the Divine, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. Hours Friday 10 Oct – 9am-3pm and Saturday 11 Oct 9am -1pm.** Shorter hours, you will be able to eat and get drinks while you are working the booth. **Get with me or Ruby** on setting of a time you can help out. Friday you will need to get a parking pass from me to park on River Oaks Blvd, you can park elsewhere no issue. Saturday the parking is easy no pass needed.

The weather was sure better this summer and I hope all your ferns and other plants are growing well for you. Mine look better than they have in the last two to three years.

Take care everyone, we hope to see you all at the September meeting!

Darla



Dues!

Dues for 2025 and now 2026 are currently being collected. If you have any questions about the status of

your dues, please contact Ruby Adams at radams13@sbcglobal.net

Your dues may be paid in person at a meeting or sent by mail to: Ruby Adams, 3906 Woodmont Circle, Houston, TX 77045-3514

Checks should be payable to: Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society (TGCFS).



July - December 2025 TGCFS Calendar

Date	Topic	Speaker/Host
9/21/25	Building a Birdbath (Hands-On)	Ceil Dow
10/19/25	What Ferns Need Winter Protection	Darla Harris
11/16/25	Ferns: Lessons in Survival from Earth's Most Adaptable Plants	Jason S. Suissa
12/21/25	Winter Party (1pm)	Patrick and Diane Hudnell



Door Prize:



Patrick Hudnell wins the door prize, an *Adiantum polyphyllum* - Giant Maidenhair!



Board Meeting

There will be a Board Meeting after the regular membership meeting on September 21st, 2025, at the Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center at 2020 Hermann Drive. Board members and all interested members are welcome to attend.



The Malayan-Asiatic species

A Study of Platycerium

By Darla Harris

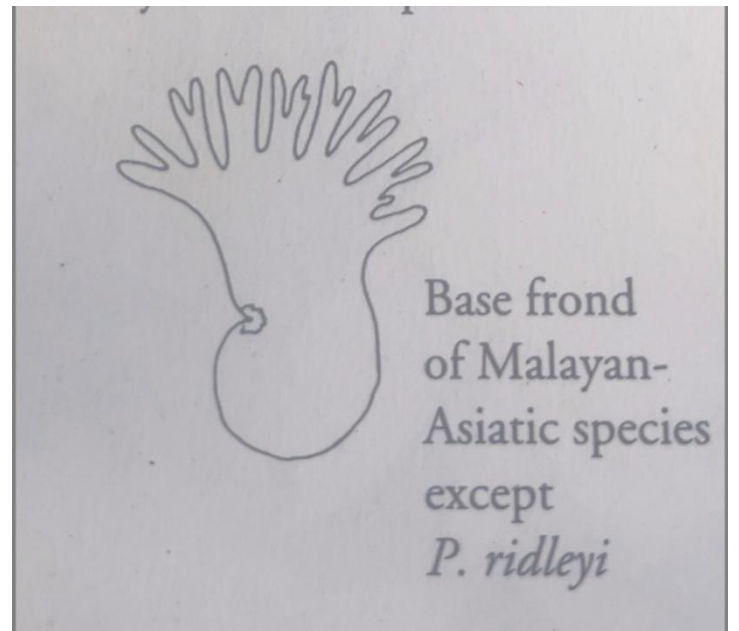
Platycerium coronarium

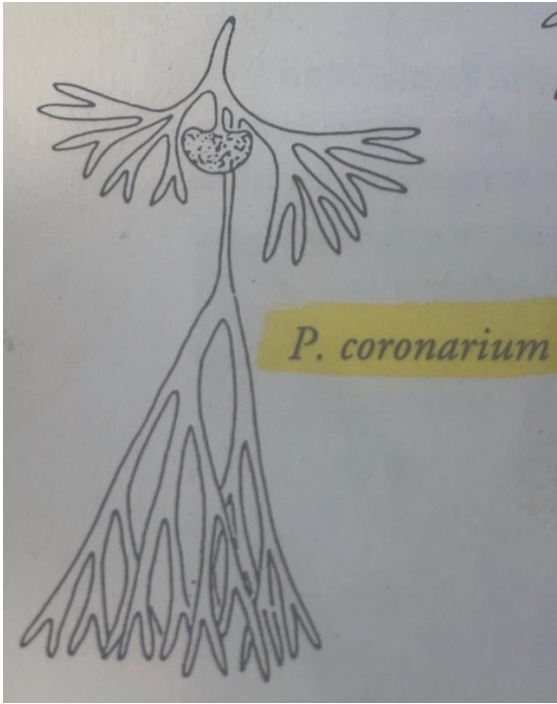
P. coronarium is another large fern like the giant four. However, unlike the other group, *coronarium* can push off a divided growing point and can make another plant. This is not a pup, like we think with all the pupping staghorn. In fact, this is the only Staghorn that reproduces like this with vegetated reproduction, as well as grown from spore.

P. coronarium has a very unique growing style that makes it easy to distinguish it from the other giants. The spore patch is a kidney-shaped lobe, that is its own structure to the fronds. The fronds themselves are unique in that they have a short set of fronds and a long pendulous frond that hangs down on a very narrow long frond then forks into several branches. It grows a nice tall basket type shield frond and grows quite tall.

It grows in nature in the warm tropical parts of the world such as Singapore. We do need to protect it for our winters, but it thrives in our warm summers. It does not like to be over watered.

This is a beautiful staghorn with multi looks their ware wide fronds, narrow fronds and one that in the middle. Definitely worth growing.





Platycerium coronarium sketch



P. coronarium before division



Another view



P. coronarium before division



New plaque for mounting



P. coronarium divided and mounted



Another view of P. coronarium divided and mounted





The August Meeting

August 17, 2025

Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

The meeting was called to order at 2:10pm at the Justin Robinson Community Center in Hermann Park.

Approximately 18 members were present. The “Go to Meeting” was streamed to members who could not make it to the in-person meeting.

Business Meeting was held first:

- Ruby Adams will take on membership duties.
- Larry Rucker is in the hospital for a hip replacement.
- We want a new booklet featuring current membership with current photos.
- We need volunteers to man TGCFs membership table at the Bulb Mart. It will be held on October 10-11 from 9am-3pm. In years past, the membership table was conveniently located next to Darla’s fern area. The Bulb Mart is held on the grounds of St. John’s Episcopal Church.
- At the November 16 meeting, Jacob S. Suissa, author of the book, “Ferns: Lessons in Survival from Earth’s Most Adaptable Plants”, Hardcover – May 6, 2025, will discuss his book. It was co-authored by Fay-Wei Li. This topic will replace the Ferns in a Terrarium project.

Presentation on “**The Giant 4, Staghorn ferns**”, presented by Darla Harris with a little help from Joe Harris.

The Giant 4 are from Malaysia and other parts of Asia. None of the “Giant 4” like to be overwatered so excellent drainage is a must for successfully growing them.

These *Platycterium*s never pup. *Platycterium coronarium* puts off an offset but it is not a pup.

Platycterium superbum

A *Platycterium superbum* example was shown. It is about 10 years old. *P. superbum* hates overwatering. They develop black spots which is often treated by Cinnamon if the spots are not severe. Cinnamon has antibacterial and antifungal properties. If black spots are severe, then the fern is treated with Rose & Flower Care BioAdvanced. This 3-in-1 formula functions as a bloom booster, insect control, and disease control. To use, sprinkle some in the open top of the *Platycterium*.

To help this fern grow well, mount on an open rack. This will help to provide excellent drainage. They do not like being mounted on a board. Boards rot & retain water too much. For small *P. superbum* plants, mount on an

open rack. Even a cookie cooling rack will work. If in a pot too long, they grow crooked. You must mount them to try to stabilize the crooked frond.

When mounting, you must stabilize the top & bottom of the fern. If you don’t, the plant could fall over because it could grow too top heavy. The growing tip could get damaged in the fall. The entire plant could die if the tip gets damaged.

If using too much moss, then it can get too soggy which can make it retain too much water.

The mounting material is called “drainage cells”. This mounting medium trend started in Asia. This can be purchased at Home Depot or Walmart. A palm tree’s cut section is an ideal mounting material when paired with the drainage cells. It helps to prevent the moss from falling through the holes of the drainage cells. Some people drill a hole in the back of a wood mount to help provide better drainage.

P. superbum only develops spore on the “U” shape of the frond.

Platycterium grande

Platycterium grande & *P. superbum* grow to be the same size. *P. grande* comes from the Philippines. Spores show up on fronds that hang down. Seems to be a slower grower than *P. superbum*. *P. grande* has spore on the finger part of the frond. Veination on *P. grande* resembles a “swish” or “wave action”.

These two ferns grow similarly. They do not like direct sun but prefer diffused bright light.

Platycterium wandae

Platycterium wandae is the biggest of the “Giant 4” and is known as the Queen Staghorn Fern. It is originally from New Guinea. Shield fronds grow upwards. Fertile fronds hang down.

P. wandae is famous for the “frill” on the growing bud area. The frill is serrated and much lacier in appearance than other growing buds. It is the identifying mark of a *P. wandae*. Shield fronds sometimes grow backwards through the drainage cells open grid.

P. wandae does not like to be overwatered so it must have excellent drainage. Can poke a hole in the bottom shield frond to help water drain through. *P. wandae* has a split spore frond with a small side & large side. Spores show up on the wings of fronds.

Platycerium holttumii

Platycerium holttumii is Darla's favorite. This fern is not the largest of the "Giant 4", but it is the easiest of the "Giant 4" to grow. They can take our area's heat. A specimen will survive to 32F with frost protection. If you could only have one of the "Giant 4" then this is the simplest to care for.

Fertile fronds have a small "wing" and large wing. Spores show up on the wide part of the wing. Darla cuts back some of the shield fronds because a stack of shield fronds can retain moisture. She cuts them back to help with drainage.

Mounting Hints:

To mount, use a regular or coated wire or fishing line to attach fern to backing. The fishing line spool cannot fit through the holes of the drainage cell so you must measure the length of wire for each wrap.

For a very young plant of a "Giant 4" fern, there may be no fertile frond to hang down so it might be hard to tell which end is up. On a young plant to determine which end is up, look at the venation. Veins circle round and they all circle to the bottom of the growing bud.

Respectfully submitted by Ceil Dow.



From the Library:

The Plantfinder's Guide to Garden Ferns; by Martin Rickard; Timber Press; 2000; 192 pages; photo illustrations by Marie O'Hara; ISBN 0-8812-476-8.

by **Bob Swanson**

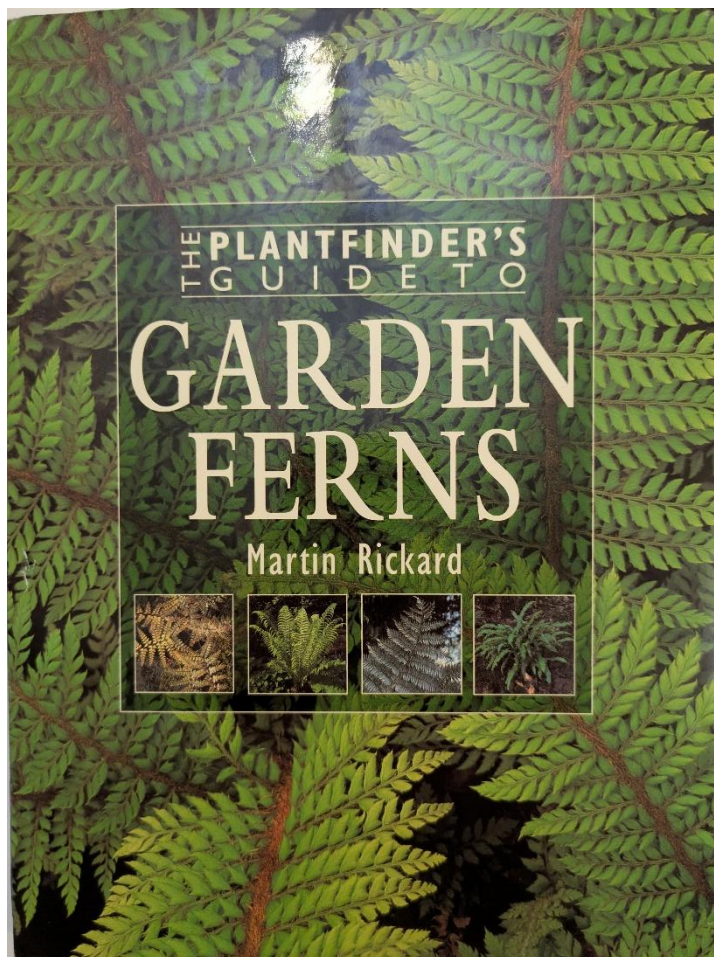
What, you say, yet another fern book review? How can you find so many? In this book we learn that over 400 books on ferns were printed in English prior to 1900. Thousands more were printed in the 20th century. I don't think we'll run out of material for centuries.

"The Plantfinder's Guide to Garden Ferns" has all the parts you expect from this type of overview: Botany, History, Propagation, Pests, Diseases. The difference here is that the work is very much focused on Britain. And Rickard put more focus than most on ferns in art and decorations. There is even a section on fern books since 1785.

Part Two is the obligatory plant list of about 140 pages. The author tells us that he has grown most of these and that the comments are based on personal observation.

What I find most useful in this book is the second chapter, "Choosing and Using Ferns". Most of the overview books I have read don't include much about siting and selecting ferns for specific garden areas. They

seem to want to get as quickly as possible to the huge plant list. Rickard spends time on multiple situations, aesthetics, and gives specific examples for a variety of situations. There is even a brief treatment of my favorite concept, stumperies!





2025 Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Carolynne White
Secretary:	Ceil Dow
Treasurer:	Larry Rucker
Board Members-at-Large:	Anne Swanson Christopher Goodgame
Education Chair:	Darla Harris
Hospitality Chair:	Anne Swanson
Library:	Fred Robinson
Membership Chair:	Ruby Adams
Newsletter:	Christopher Goodgame
Spore Exchange:	Patrick Hudnall
Ways and Means:	Larry Rucker
Raffle, Store, etc.	Rick Dow
Web Master:	Malcolm McCorquodale
Welcoming at Door:	TBD



The American Fern Society (AFS)

The American Fern Society is over 120 years old. With over 900 members worldwide, it is one of the largest international fern clubs in the world. It was established in 1893 with the objective of fostering interest in ferns and fern allies. It exchanges information and specimens between members via their publications and spore exchange.

AFS non-professional membership (\$20) includes access to the Spore Exchange and subscription to the Fiddlehead Forum.

Professional membership (\$40) includes the benefits above plus access to the American Fern Journal.

Please note that donations to the AFS are not tax deductible.

To find out more about the Society and/or join, visit <https://www.amerfernsoc.org/>