

Winter Protection for Tree Ferns

A growing number of people are giving a home to a tree fern or three! These wonderful Antipodeans are a great addition to any garden and will make any dark corner or under-canopy come alive. There are many types of tree fern now available in the UK, although we primarily recommended *Dicksonia antarctica*. It is a magnificent plant and is by far the best for cultivation outside in the UK. *Dicksonia antarctica* is an evergreen and in some protected warm gardens will keep their crown of fronds right through the winter with no protection at all. Unfortunately most of us don't have such ideal conditions, and we need to give the fern some protection from the worst of the winter, as detailed below:



1. Gently place straw into the crown of the fern, remember not to push too hard or the delicate new fronds (crosiers) inside will be damaged. Protection like this is all that is needed for most gardens in the south and other reasonably mild gardens across the UK.

2. In colder areas of the UK or in a period of penetrating cold or heavy snow then gather the leaves up around the crown and tie them up.



3. After tying the fronds together wrap the whole of the plant in layers of frost protection fleece. The number of layers will depend on how much protection is needed. Some other half-hardy tree ferns would also benefit from a layer of straw under the fleece.

4. Tie the fleece up with twine. As you can see the fern is warm and snug. All half-hardy ground ferns can also be treated in this way with straw and/or leaves, anything to keep the frost away from the crown while being able to breathe.

