**Polypodium aurem**

Rabbit’s Foot Fern

*Polypodium aurem*, the Rabbit’s Foot Fern is native from Florida to Argentina. It has a thick creeping rhizome covered with golden-brown scales. The furry appearance of these rhizomes gives the plant its common name, which it shares with a number of other fern species.

*Polypodium aureum* rhizomes send up fronds in fiddleheads, or crosiers that unfurl to a height of 3-4 feet with a 2 foot spread and make striking hanging plants. Plants have a feathery appearance and the leaves have an attractive bluish cast. Healthy plants produce yellow-orange spores in clusters called sori on the underside of mature fronds. To ensure vigorous growth, the soil should be porous and allow free water passage. Soil should consist of 2 parts peat moss to 1 part loam to 1 part sand or perlite. Water evenly throughout the year, less frequently in winter, but never allow the soil to dry out. Fertilize every other week in the growth period with a balanced fertilizer and repot every other year or so, as needed. High humidity is essential for growing ferns. If your surroundings are not humid, mist the plant several times per day. This fern is relatively easy to grow from spores, which can be directly cast on damp sterile soil under terrarium moistness and wait for small plants to be established.
**Agave attenuata** - Soft-Leaved Agave

*Agave attenuata*, or Soft-leaved Agave, is a native of Mexico. An attractive plant, it is frequently overlooked for pot culture. The 2-foot (60 cm) leaves are soft green or gray green and somewhat translucent. Plants can reach 5 feet (1.5 m) tall and form dense clumps, given the opportunity. It is an excellent plant for southern exposure in the home environment and lacks the spines of most Agaves. In the landscape plants are hardy in zones 9-12.

**Blooming:** Flowers are greenish yellow on dense arching spikes 12-24 feet (4-7 meters) long, but it may take up to 10 years to bloom. Spikes form in November and bloom in winter. Each plant stalk blooms only once (the plant is considered monocarpic). Plants save up energy for their whole lives for this and seem to expend it all in this showy display--not a common event. The massiveness of the inflorescence is impressive and stalks have to be trained not to puncture the glass of our greenhouse!
Lantana camara - Yellow Sage

Lantana camara is native to Tropical America. Lantana is a vigorous shrub that often reaches 6 to 8 feet (nearly 3 m) in the greenhouse. It will grow outside in zone 7 but should be treated as an annual. Plants bloom all year long in the greenhouse; outside they bloom from spring to first frost. Flower heads are 2 inches across, starting out yellow, then turning salmon in color. They are great plants to attract butterflies in the garden.

Lantana camara need full sun to light shade, growing in almost any soil. We use a compost consisting of 2 parts peat moss to 2 parts loam to 1 part sand. Water the plants deeply at least once a week depending on the size of the plant and fertilize once a month in the growing season with balanced fertilizer diluted to 1/4 the recommended strength. Too much water and fertilizer stimulates vegetative growth at the expense of blooms. Plants are propagated by cuttings of softwood or by seeds.
**Ananas comosus** or Pineapple makes a distinctive houseplant. Pineapple is a rosette plant with long, narrow leaves bearing sawtooth edges. Pineapples are native to Tropical America. It takes 2 years for the plant to mature enough to bloom and produce fruit. The fruit is produced from the fused inflorescence, borne on top of a sturdy stalk at the center of the plant. Homegrown pineapples are not as large as commercial pineapples.

*Ananas comosus* need full sun and temperatures above 68° F. We use a soil mix consisting of 2 parts peat moss to 1 part loam to 1 part sand or perlite. Allow the plant to dry in-between waterings. Fertilize every 4-week with a balanced fertilizer diluted to ½ the strength recommended on the label.

*Ananas comosus* is easily propagated by cutting the leafy top from a commercial pineapple. Make sure to clean all of the yellow fruit from the leaf top, which may cause the plant to rot before it is established. Peel 4 layers of leaves off and root the top in water or damp sand-peat mix. After roots appear, transfer to an 8-inch pot for growing. They are also started from offshoots of the main plant.
Psidium guajava - Guava

Psidium guajava or guava, native from Mexico to Peru, is a small tree with distinctive 4-angled branches and peeling bark. Their size in culture is easily controlled in containers, but in nature, they will reach a height of 12-14 feet. Our plant in the greenhouse is 4 feet tall in a 5 gallon container and 10 years old. Plants flower in the spring and summer: White blooms are 2½ inches across and usually last one day. Small fruits about 2 inches in diameter follow them. The fruit can be used to make preserves.

Psidium guajava need full sun to partial shade with a rich well-drained soil (in our case, 2 parts peat moss to 2 parts loam to 1 part sand). Plants are kept moist during the growing season. Fertilize weekly with a balanced fertilizer. During winter rest, temperatures should be kept at 55°-60° F (13-15°C). Cooler temperatures will cause the plant to lose its leaves. Trimming and repotting should be done in early spring before new growth starts.

Psidium guajava are best propagated from seed. Seeds usually germinate in 7-14 days at 65° F (18°C).
Amorphophallus bulbifer is one of the more interesting Aroids that I have grown. The foliage will reach 3 feet (1 m) in 6 inch (15 cm) pots. The dark green leaf and spotted stems make it an interesting and attractive plant. Devil’s Tongue is native to northeastern India. Plants produce their striking inflorescences in the late spring. The spathe is 8 inches (20 cm) long with greenish lines a spotted pink outside and rose-colored interior.

Amorphophallus bulbifer thrives in rich loamy soil in partial shade. Compost should consist of 2 parts loam to 1 part peat moss to 1 part sand. Keep the plant evenly moist all through the growing season and fertilize monthly with half recommended concentration. Water should be gradually withheld starting in October until the leaf withers. Store corms at a temperature above 50º F (10º C). They can be brought into active growth in late March. If the corms are strong enough, a blossom will soon be produced. The leaf follows soon afterwards.

Propagation: Amorphophallus bulbifer are propagated by division of offsets or by seed.
Tillandsia caput-medusae is an attractive epiphytic bromeliad native to Central America and Mexico. The thick, channeled, tapering and twisting leaves arise from an inflated pseudobulb and are up to 10 in (25 cm) long and are covered in small gray hairs. As with all Tillandsias, they are very easy to grow. We attach ours to slabs of oak wood with small staples and cover the roots with reindeer moss to hold moisture.

Plants bloom in spring to early summer. The red inflorescences are usually unbranched or digitate, with bright violet flowers ~1.25 inches (3.2 cm), with stamens exerted. In the growing season, plants are misted daily and humidity levels run between 65-75% at all times. Fertilizers are not needed. In late fall, misting is restricted, depending on the humidity levels in the greenhouse.

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Passiflora foetida, or Running Pop, is a perennial vine that climbs with tendrils, which is native to the Old World Tropics. It is an extremely polymorphic species. The stems are covered in stiff bristly hairs, with dark green 3-5 lobed leaves. The leaves have a very disagreeable odor when brushed against or crushed. Our plants grew 13 feet (3 m) in one season. They are very vigorous growers and need plenty of room to grow. The plants do extremely well in containers and are hardy in the landscape in USDA zone 9-11. (Note: I would like to thank my friend Debbie in San Antonio for sending me seeds of this plant.)

Blooming: Our plants in the greenhouse have flowered non stop since planting them. The 1-2 inch (2.5-5 cm) purplish flowers are solitary in leaf axils. The petals are slightly shorter than the sepals, with white corona filaments banded with purple. The globose fruit is bright red to yellow and is edible. Since the species is polymorphic, flower color can range from white, to lilac and purple.

Culture: Passiflora foetida need full sun to light shade, with a moist, well-drained soil. In the greenhouse, we...
Camellia sinensis – Tea Plant - Theaceae

Camellia sinensis is the plant source of tea, which is the world’s most important caffeine beverage. The young processed leaves yield tea. Tea plants are evergreen, medium sized shrubs (4-6 ft., 2-3 m) and can be grown outside in zones 7-9. The tea plant is native to SE Asia. Flowers are solitary in the axils of the leaves, up to 1-1/2 in (4 cm) in diameter, and are fragrant.

Camellia sinensis needs full sun to partial shade and prefers a well drained, neutral to slightly acidic soil that is rich in organic matter (e.g., 2 parts peat moss or compost to 2 parts loam to 1 part sand or perlite). Since root hairs are very fine, plants should never be allowed to dry out. Increase watering when the plant is actively growing or in bloom and fertilize every 2-3 weeks in spring through fall, using a fertilizer for acid loving plants diluted to ½ the recommended strength. Repot in late winter or early spring every 2-3 yrs. Camellia sinensis is propagated by cutting or seed. Soak seeds in warm water for 24 hour and germinate.
Neomerica gracilis is a tropical iris that is native to S. Mexico to Brazil. When the Apostle Plant blooms, it is an indicator that spring has arrived in the greenhouse. Flowers are up to 2 inches across. The outer perianth segments are white with yellow and brown markings; the inner ones are blue. The flower is lightly scented and lasts only one day. Plants need intermediate temperatures and a humid environment. They do best in partial shade (in the greenhouse we use 40% shade). Compost consists of 2 parts peat moss to 1 part loam to 1 part sand. Keep the compost evenly moistened but not saturated. Fertilize weekly with a balanced fertilizer diluted to ½ the recommended strength. On the label, Neomerica gracilis plants are treated with a fungicide.

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**Oncidium Sharry Baby 'Sweet Fragrance' Orchid**

*Oncidium Sharry Baby 'Sweet Fragrance'* is an epiphytic orchid of hybrid origins (O. Jamie Sutton X O. Honolulu). The plant's pseudobulbs are egg-shaped to 2.5 inches (6.4 cm) across by approximately 3.5 inches (9 cm) long with 2 leathery leaves up to 18 inches (45 cm) long by 2 inches (5 cm) wide. I received this orchid as a gift and was really impressed with the flower size and fragrance. It is an easy orchid to grow and I highly recommend it for orchid enthusiasts and for beginners.

In the greenhouse, the plants bloom in late summer to early fall. The rich mahogany and cream colored flowers are very showy and have the fragrance of vanilla chocolate. *Oncidium Sharry Baby 'Sweet Fragrance'* needs a well-drained compost and full to partial sun. In the greenhouse, we use a compost consisting of *Osmunda* or tree fern fiber, with sphagnum moss and small bark chips added to ensure good drainage. Plants are watered and allowed to dry before adding water again. We fertilize the plants weekly with an orchid special fertilizer during the growing season. Plants are propagated by the division of pseudobulbs in the spring.

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Euphorbia pulcherrima, the poinsettia, is known all over the world as the flower of Christmas, blooming in Nov and Dec. Growing naturally in Mexico, the plant was named after Joel Poinsett, who introduced them to the United States in the early 1800s. Flowers consist of small golden cups, called cyathia—the red, pink, or white bracts surrounding the inflorescence are much more conspicuous. Plants need to be kept in the dark for 16 h per day to induce flowering (see website for details).