

Bird's Nest Fern (*Asplenium*)



A. nidus

Ferns have always been an important group in the tropical or foliage plant industry. Their diversity of shapes and sizes offer the commercial grower and consumer almost inexhaustible choices. A popular group of ferns often referred to as “Bird's Nest Ferns” are species of the genus *Asplenium*. *Asplenium nidus* has been a popular tropical plant going back to the Victorian era and remains a popular fern today. On the scene more recently are species and named selections of *Asplenium antiquum* sometimes referred to as the Japanese Bird's Nest Fern. Both species grow in a

bowl or vase shape leading to the common name Bird's Nest Fern.

A. nidus and *A. antiquum* are easy to grow ferns for both the commercial grower and consumer. They lend themselves to multiple uses since they can easily be incorporated into the garden, or grown in containers for indoor or outdoor display. Bird's Nest Ferns are excellent plants for making statements in and around the office and at home.

Asplenium nidus is a larger structured plant than *A. antiquum* and will grow to larger specs given time. It produces simple, broad, bright green leaves with mildly undulating or wavy margins. The most commonly grown *A. antiquum* varieties are named selections



A. 'Crissie'



A. 'Leslie'



A. 'Victoria'

of the species. *A. 'Victoria'* has distinctive "wavy" fronds that grow in a beautiful rosette and was one of the first patented ferns in the United States. The newest named selections, 'Crissie' and 'Leslie' take this group of ferns to the next level of interest. As these plants mature, the ends of the fronds become branched or crested forming a very unique look. 'Crissie' has a more open habit and larger structure than 'Leslie' and is perfect for 5" to 8" containers and requires some spacing to maintain symmetry. 'Leslie' has a more compact, upright growth habit making a great 4" to 6" container plant that can be grown with close pot spacing.

Both *A. nidus* and *A. antiquum* varieties have similar cultural requirements and can be grown together.

Light: Mature plants can tolerate high light levels but not direct sun, but commercially grow best with 80% to 90% shade or 1,000 and 2,000 foot candles. Excessive light will slow the growth and cause frond deformities.

Media: Use a potting medium high in organic content, e.g. peat: bark or perlite (2:1 by volume), that has good water-holding capacity and good aeration. A pH of 5.5 to 6.5 is preferred.

Fertilizer: Birds Nest Ferns are light feeders and only require low doses of fertilizer. Use a fertilizer with a 17-5-17, 14-4-14 or 20-10-20 ratio. Do not apply urea or fertilizer formulas with high ammonia nitrogen. Apply at 100 ppm N with clear water irrigation every second fertilization. Excessive fertilizer will slow the growth rate and cause fronds to thicken, deform and can cause leaf necrosis especially if media is allowed to dry out.

Temperature: The best temperature for Bird's Nest Fern growth is 70-90°F. Temperatures slightly outside of this range will not reduce plant quality but will reduce growth rates. High humidity should be maintained.

Pests and Diseases: Bird's Nest Ferns generally do not experience a lot of pest or disease problems. Watch for bacterial leaf (frond) blight caused by *Pseudomonas* which is generally associated with excessive overhead irrigation or rainfall. Pests to watch for are Caterpillars, Fungus Gnats, Mealybugs, Scale and Slugs.

Grower to Grower: On arrival, place the liners in a protected area and water immediately. It is always best to plant liners as soon as possible on arrival. Do not plant the liners deep and be careful not to overwater while plants are establishing. Keep foliage dry. Drip or sub-irrigation works best for most container sizes.

Approximate finish times planted from a 72cp tray.

- A. 'Crissie': 6" pot 24 weeks
- A. 'Lesslie': 4" pot 16 weeks
- A. Nidus: 6" pot 28 weeks+
- A. 'Victoria': 6" pot 24 weeks+

This text is a recommendation only; it is not an endorsement of any products or acceptance of any liability as a result of usage.

Updated: 12.10.2013

**Oglesby Plant International, Inc., info@oglesbytc.com, WWW.OGLESBYTC.COM
26664 SR 71N, Altha, Florida U.S.A. 1.800.762.0022, Fax: 1.850.762.3806**