PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Pteridium aquilinum var. esculentum* (G. Forst.) Kuhn

**GENUS** *Pteridium* **FAMILY** Dennstaedtiaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Bracken fern, Fiddlehead Fern

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Rhizome, Fronds, Leaves, Roots, Fiddleheads, Vegetable

The young tender fronds (fiddleheads) are cooked and eaten as a vegetable.
The underground stems or roots have been eaten as a famine food. They can be roasted and ground into flour.
CAUTION: The young fronds contain a cancer causing substance called ptaquiloside. Cooking or blanching may remove this but normally bracken should not be eaten regularly.

## DESCRIPTION

A fern. It grows on land. The rhizome is long and creeping. It is covered with fine pale brown hairs. The fronds are large. They are divided 3-4 times. The lowest pair of leaflets are larger than the others. The young leaves curl like a fiddle-head before they unfold. The spore bodies are around the edge.

Now Pteridium esculentum

## HABITAT

A temperate plant. In Nepal it grows between 1200-3400 m altitude. In southern China it grows at about 1,000 m above sea level. It grows in open, damp hillsides. It suits hardiness zones 8-11.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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