PLANT FACT SHEET

Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Pteridium esculentum (Forster f.) Cockayne

GENUS *Pteridium* **FAMILY** Dennstaedtiaceae

COMMON NAMES Bracken, Common bracken, fern

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Rhizome, Root, Fronds, Leaves

The young unfurled fonds are eaten as a vegetable. They should be soaked in water for 24 hours and dried before being cooked and eaten.
The young underground rhizomes are also eaten. It is ground to a paste and can be mixed with wheat or barley flour. The roots are roasted, crushed into a paste and then baked.
CAUTION: Bracken has been linked with stomach cancer.

DESCRIPTION

A fern. It grows 0.8-1.5 m tall. The frond is rigid and greatly divided. The leaflets are small and narrow. They are dark green and leathery. The edges of the leaves tends to turn under. There are long rhizomes (underground stems) covered with fine brown hairs. The spores are beneath the fronds. These are very small.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows in undergrowth in wet dense forests above 400-500 m altitude in the tropics. It does best in moist places. In Northeastern India it grows between 1,600-3,200 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 8-11. Tasmania Herbarium.

NOTES

Caution: The fern contains ptaquiloside a chemical which causes cancer and a chemical which slows down formation of bone marrow.

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