

# Tree Ferns

*Cyathea australis* (Rough Tree Fern)

*Dicksonia antarctica* (Soft Tree Ferns)

## At a Glance...

**Size:** Rough Tree Ferns can grow up to 12 metres high and Soft Tree Fern grow up to 15 metres high.

## Habitat:

Both species of tree fern are found throughout eastern Australia in cool, moist, shady locations in bushland and rainforests, particularly near streams and waterfalls. They love the dappled light created by a tree canopy or larger shrubs.

## What Is a Tree Fern?

The Rough Tree Fern is one of the tallest growing tree ferns in Australia. They have been known to grow over 12 metres tall. They are also the most common tree fern and can tolerate higher exposure to the sun than the Soft Tree Fern.

The Rough Tree Fern is named after its trunk which is covered with pointed tubercles, making it rough to touch. The fronds also have a sharp texture on the base of the stems. The fronds are popular with Lyrebirds and possums, often nesting in the centre of the crown. The unrolling new fronds are a delicacy enjoyed by rosellas and possums.

The Soft tree fern can develop a large trunk, over 15 metres tall, reaching greater heights than its relative the Rough Tree Fern. The trunk is covered with brown fibrous roots. Smooth frond stems with soft brown hairs sprout from the top of the trunk. The fronds can grow up to 2 metres long.



Soft Tree Ferns thrive in filtered sunlight, loose well drained soils with lots of organic matter and plenty of water. In specimens growing under dense canopies in forest gullies, the trunks are often bent reflecting earlier impacts of fallen trees and limbs from the upper canopy. Epiphytic (plants that grow on other plants, relying on them for mechanical support but not for nutrients) ferns grow on the trunks of the Soft Tree Fern.

Unlike many Australian plants, tree ferns don't respond well to fire, therefore they are only found in older bush areas like rainforests where there is a low frequency of fire.

## Where to see Tree Ferns in Victorian parks?

The Dandenong Ranges, Yarra Ranges and Tarra Bulga National Parks are great areas to view rainforest environments including some amazing Tree Ferns.

## Want to Know More?

<http://www.anbg.gov.au/flora>

fact file