

# THE PURDUE LANDSCAPE REPORT

## Plant Picks: Japanese Painted Fern (*Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum*)

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*This series will highlight unique and interesting landscape plants that are not as common in the landscape. Many of these plants aren't readily available at your local nursery or garden center. If you are interested in purchasing one of these plants, I recommend contacting your local nursery or garden center about availability.*

### Japanese Painted Fern (*Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum*)



Figure 1. Fronds of Ursula's Red Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum* 'Ursula's Red').



Figure 2. Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum*) in a shade garden.

**Zone:** 3-8

**Expected Mature Size:** 1 ft. - 1.5 ft. tall x 1.5 ft. - 2 ft. tall

Japanese painted fern, a mainstay in Japanese gardens for many years, was introduced into the European garden in the 1800's. This graceful, but utilitarian and low maintenance, herbaceous perennial has been a staple in older shade gardens in the United States for generations. So, why is this plant included in this series? New installs almost always include hostas in shady areas, but it's important to consider diversifying the plant palate in the landscape to decrease the potential for disease and insect infestations (think emerald ash borer, Dutch elm disease, callery pear), increasing ecological services from the landscape, and improved aesthetics. It's easy to fall into the same plant selection habits, but remember to branch out (*pun intended*) with all of the selections that are available for each unique landscape environment.



Figure 3. Ursula's Red Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum* 'Ursula's Red').



Figure 4. Red veins in Ursula's Red Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum* 'Ursula's Red').

This hardy fern does well in partial to full shade and requires adequate moisture in a well-drained soil.

There are generally no major pests that affect Japanese painted fern. If a problem arises, consult the Purdue Plant Doctor for diagnosing and treatment considerations:

<https://purdueplantdoctor.com/partproblems/flower-313>

**Resources/Further Reading:**

Missouri Botanical Garden:

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b640>

University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service:

<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/yard-garden/resource-library/plant-week/japanese-painted-fern.aspx>

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