

## Platycerium

### Staghorn/Moosehorn Fern

“Staghorn” is the common name used for most varieties of this fern family. They are well suited to the San Diego environment, and are easy to grow. They prefer bright filtered light for most of the day. Only a few of the rare varieties need protection from the cold in this area, however, if you think it might get less than 28 degrees, you might want to offer some protection.

The ferns should be watered about once a week during cooler weather and two times a week during hot weather, but don't keep them too wet. The fern will respond to fertilizer and we recommend using a general purpose type. If you use a liquid type, try to feed every two weeks. Dry fertilizers are usually applied about every two months. We recommend GroPower, dry fertilizers or the tablets about every three months. The foliage will be larger and darker green if they get regular feedings.

If the plants get too large they can be easily divided by removing portions of the older clumps and mounting them on new boards or planting them in wire baskets, although *P. Suberbum* and *P. Grande* can not be divided. It is best if the divisions are not too small, about 10” to 12” diameter divisions are almost foolproof. Use an old saw or knife to cut into the base, about 3” deep and remove as much of the rooted area as possible. As a general rule, the mounting board should be about two times as large as the plant being mounted. Redwood or cedar boards last the longest. Place a little green moss behind the division and more around the edge. This will help hold moisture and give it something to root into. In most cases, we recommend holding the plant in place with monofilament line (15# to 20# fish line) laced back and forth across the shields. Small nails at the edge of the board are the easiest way to hold the crisscrossed line in place. Use ample amounts of line to keep the plant firmly in place. On some very large plants, it may be necessary to use a stainless steel strap to keep it from falling off. Wire baskets are ideal if you want the plant to grow into a ball. Place a few divisions through the side of the basket and perhaps one on the top and in a few months it will be very presentable. Thrip and scale are infrequent pests and are easily controlled with a systemic insecticide. Do not spray when temperatures are more than 80 degrees, and be sure the plant is moist.