

Fascinating Ferns:

Their
Amazing
Longevity



THE LEAF OF THE FERN IS KNOWN AS THE FROND, AND TODAY VARIES IN SIZE FROM THE TREE FERN'S 12-FOOT LENGTH TO THE TINIEST MOSQUITO FERN WITH LEAVES OF ONLY 1/16 OF AN INCH LONG. THE FROND BEGINS IN A TIGHTLY CURLED SHAPE KNOWN AS THE CROSIER OR FIDDLEHEAD, AND DURING DEVELOPMENT, UNFURLS TO BECOME A LEAF.

*W*E LOVE OUR FERNS IN FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS, IN OUR GARDENS AND ON OUR NATURE WALKS. THE NEXT TIME YOU GAZE AT THEIR BEAUTY, TRY TO FATHOM THEIR EMERGENCE ALMOST 400 MILLION YEARS AGO!

*H*UMANS HAVE THE INSIGHT TO IMAGINE A TIME SPAN OF HUNDREDS OF YEARS, BUT IT IS HARD TO COMPREHEND 354 MILLION YEARS. THAT IS HOW LONG AGO FERNS HAVE BEEN PROVEN TO HAVE EXISTED, ACCORDING TO FOSSIL DATING. FOR 64 MILLION YEARS THEY GREW IN A WARM, HUMID CLIMATE IN SWAMPS AND CONTRIBUTED A GREAT AMOUNT OF OXYGEN TO THE AIR; SO MUCH SO, THAT PLANTS REACHED GIGANTIC SIZES. WHEN THE FERNS DIED THEY FORMED PEAT BEDS, WHICH, AFTER TIME AND COMPRESSION OF LAYER UPON LAYER, EVENTUALLY BECAME COAL OR THE CARBON IN THAT PARTICULAR PERIOD IN HISTORY KNOWN AS THE CARBONIFEROUS ERA.

