

# The Fernery



**The Fernery is a modern structure that harks back to the days when many old homesteads had a special area for delicate plants - a place to survive harsh Australian summers.**

## The Plant Collection

Colourful and unusual natives and exotics comprise The Fernery's collection of flora. The plant collection is not complete and will be added to over time.

## A Place of Ferns

King or Giant Fern - *Angiopteris evecta* is a massive fern with fronds up to 5 metres or more long, that are reputed to be the largest in the world. King Fern is one of only two species in a very primitive family (*Marattiaceae*) that occur in Australia. Both the King Fern and its close relative, the Potato Fern - *Marattia oreades* grow naturally in

rainforests at Eungella. King Fern also occurs in other places in Eastern Queensland and Fraser Island, in the Northern Territory and extends outside Australia but the Potato Fern is endemic to Queensland. They both like plenty of water so grow along creek banks and gullies.

Older King Ferns develop massive fleshy trunks. The smooth thick green fleshy stems of their fronds (stipes) contain no strengthening tissue but are supported entirely by the sap inside their cells (turgor pressure). The fronds collapse if the plants dry out but can soon recover if sufficient water is applied.

King Ferns, like all other ferns, belong to a division in the plant kingdom that is much older than the flowering plants. Rather than reproducing from seeds like the flowering plants do, ferns

reproduce from spores and have a very distinct, 2-phased life cycle. Spores are dust-like re-productive cells that are held in specialised cases (sporangia). These are clustered in distinct patterns on the underside of fertile fronds. These clusters (sori) are usual dark coloured and the patterns they make are a very important feature in identifying different species of fern.

The sori of King Ferns contain 10 to 15 sporangia that are born along veins in from the edge of the frond segments.

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### Bromeliads

This attractive family of about 3000 species originate from tropical North, Central and South America. Colourful leaves and striking blooms make these plants a hardy and beautiful choice for shady gardens and even indoors. Also featured are members from the Tillandsia genus, with grey foliage in wild and unusual shapes. From dryer climes, Tillandsias do not hold water like most Bromeliads.

### Wharf logs

The massive logs, used here as protective walls, like those in other parts of the Shade Garden and the Eungella Cloud Garden were once part of the pier wharf at the Port of Mackay. Weathered by the elements and inscribed and decorated by sea creatures, these recycled forest giants are once again providing shelter for living plants.



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