



SWEETFERN CARE

LIGHT

Sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrina*) grows in full sun to partial shade. Give it room to spread in a naturalized bed or on a slope. Its aromatic, fern-like leaves belong to a woody shrub, so it should not receive the care used for woodland ferns.

WATER

Water deeply at planting and check the original root ball through establishment. Established sweetfern tolerates drought and other variable conditions, but young roots still need moisture. Avoid keeping a nursery root ball either saturated or repeatedly bone dry.

SOIL & PLANTING

Plant at nursery depth in well-drained, preferably sandy, acidic soil. Choose the location carefully because established plants resent transplanting. Mulch lightly without covering the stem bases. Allow room for underground spread and avoid disturbing roots while cultivating nearby.

FEEDING

Sweetfern can obtain nitrogen through a root association, so routine heavy nitrogen feeding is unnecessary. Use a soil test before applying amendments. If a specific deficiency is confirmed, seek a modest treatment rather than feeding as though this were a hungry flowering annual.

SEASONAL CARE

Pruning is usually minimal. Remove dead or damaged stems in spring and keep only the growth needed within the planting boundary. Avoid routine shearing that spoils the natural form. Cut back unwanted shoots where a spreading colony would crowd neighboring plants.

HELPFUL TIPS

Leaves normally drop for winter. Once established, sweetfern can expand into a broad colony, making it useful for naturalistic ground cover and slope stabilization. It generally has few pest problems. Persistent decline calls for checking roots, moisture and site conditions before applying treatments.