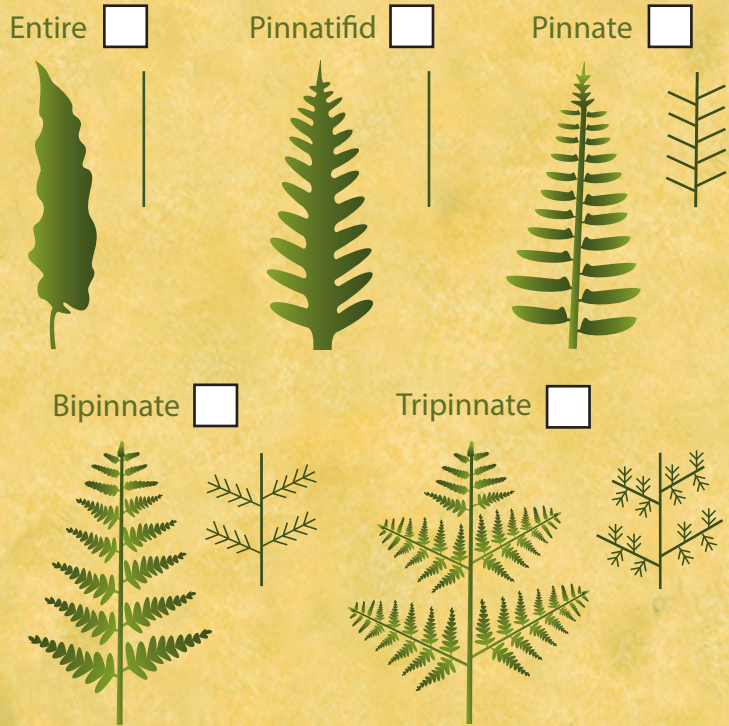


# Fern Tracker

At first glance, many ferns look alike. But if you take a second look, these beautiful plants provide clues to help you identify them. Use the illustrations on the right to see how many you can find!

## Fern Forms

The **blade**, or leaf of a fern can be found in five major forms. Look at how the blade splits into leaflets. How many blade forms can you find?



## Spores Not Seeds

Most plants use **seeds** to reproduce, but ferns use single cells called **spores**. Depending on the fern species, spore-producing objects called **sori** are found on either fronds or stalks. Some spores that are released and find moist ground will germinate. Can you find sori on a fern? \_\_\_\_\_



Leaflet with sori



**Bracken Fern**   
(*Pteridium aquilinum*)

Do the fronds feel leathery? Are there spores along the curled edges of some of the leaflets?



**Christmas Fern**   
(*Polystichum acrostichoides*)

Is the leaflet shaped like a stocking? Are there sori on the underside of some of the leaflets? Is the fern in a pinnate form?

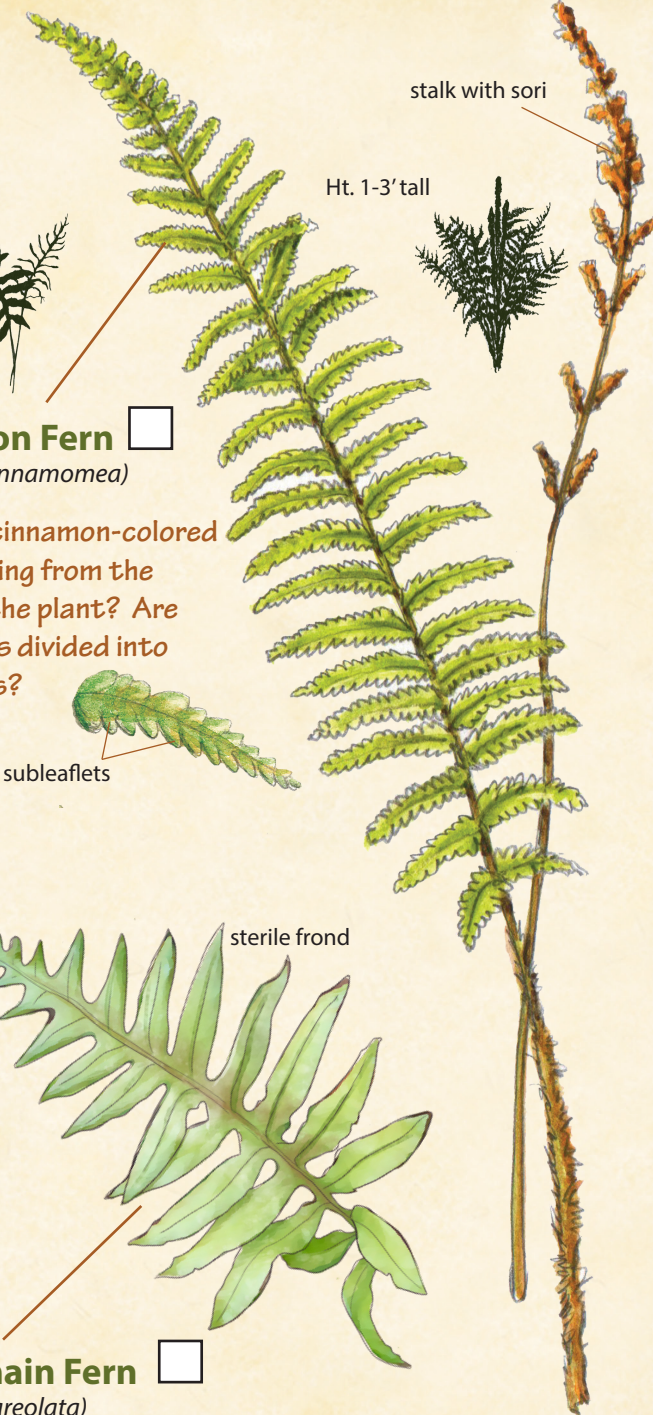


**Cinnamon Fern**   
(*Osmunda cinnamomea*)

Is there a cinnamon-colored stalk growing from the center of the plant? Are the leaflets divided into subleaflets?



subleaflets



sori on fertile frond

sterile frond

**Netted Chain Fern**   
(*Woodwardia areolata*)

Are the leaves waxy? Are the fronds deeply lobed? Do the veins of the leaf form a net-like pattern?



# Fern Parts

The image below shows all the major parts that might be found on a fern. Find a fern near the trail. How many different parts can you identify?

Note: not all ferns have all of these parts.

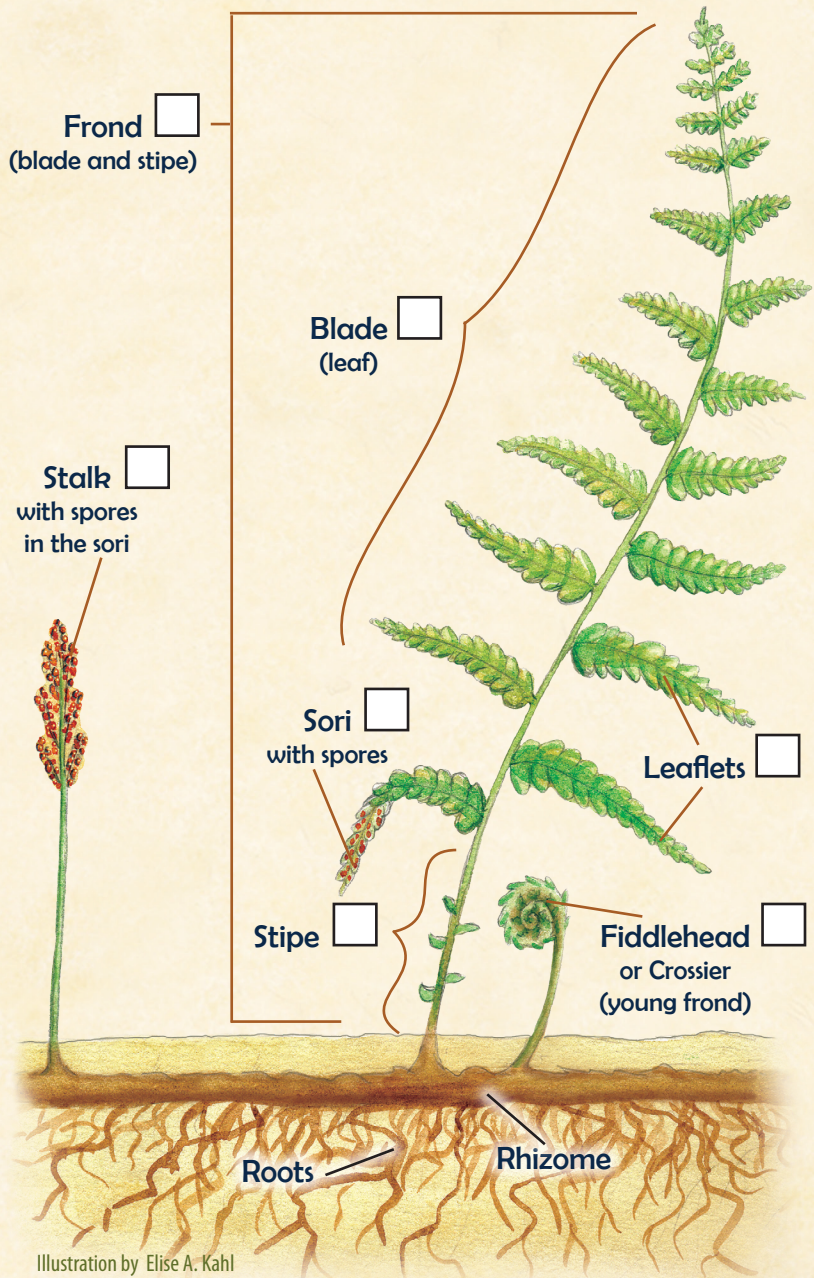


Illustration by Elise A. Kahl

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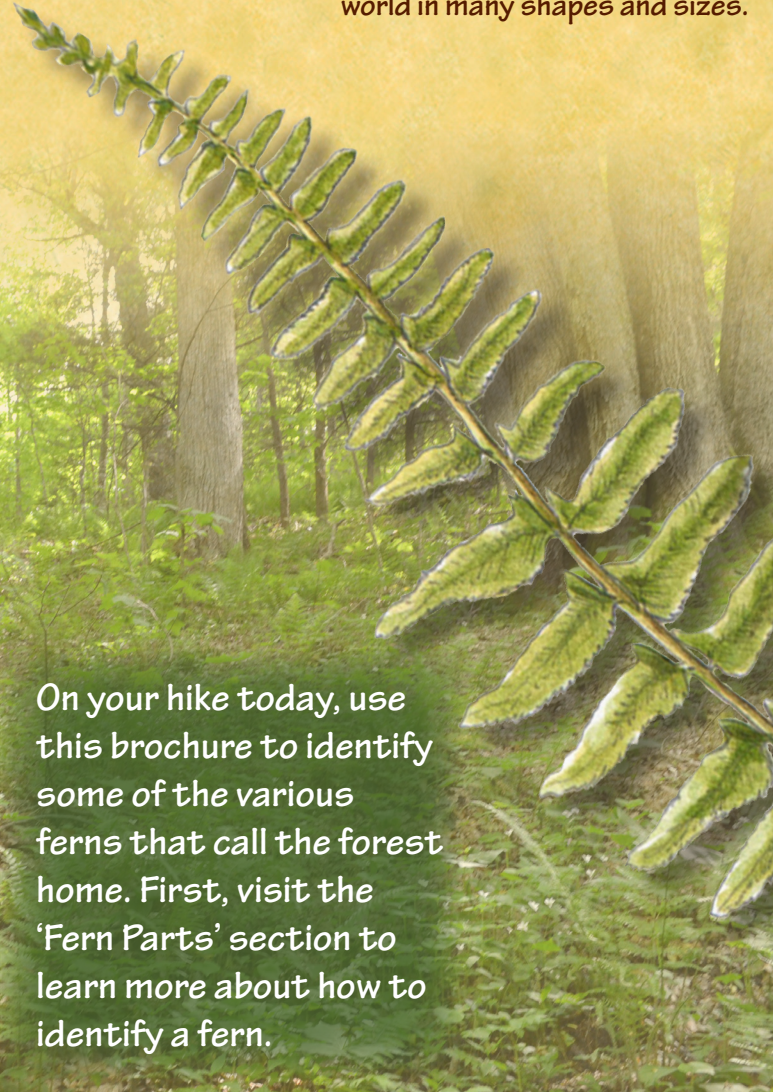
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# Finding Ferns

Ferns are among the oldest types of plants on Earth and were one of the dominant plants when dinosaurs lived. Today, ferns grow all over the world in many shapes and sizes.



On your hike today, use this brochure to identify some of the various ferns that call the forest home. First, visit the 'Fern Parts' section to learn more about how to identify a fern.