

# **MACHO fern**

*my 'BIG' purchase this year*

Instead of an aquatic plant this month, I'm featuring an earthly one, a really big fern. A few of these large ferns were displayed with the annuals and perennials for sale in front of my neighborhood Cub Foods. A sign identified them as 'porch ferns,' no other name. Traditional porch ferns are the Boston and Kimberly. This fern makes those classics look small.



**Nephrolepis biserrate 'Macho'**

Even some tattered fronds due to packing and shipping didn't deter me from buying. I had never seen a fern this large offered in the Twin Cities. I upsized its two-gallon growing container to three gallons, using bagged potting mix and have fertilized a few times using an all-purpose liquid one. This fern quickly became my favorite plant purchase of 2021.

After several weeks, I called the local wholesaler that supplies Cub's outdoor plants for a name. She said 'Macho.' I couldn't help but smile as the name is so appropriate for such a brawny plant. *Nephrolepis biserrate* 'Macho' is a giant sword fern, native to Florida, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Louisiana and the Virgin Islands, growing in shaded, moist to wet areas. It is a protected plant in Florida.



***Nephrolepis biserrate* 'Macho'**

Macho ferns require the same care as other ferns. Outdoors, it needs shade to part shade and moist but not soggy soil. As I write, it is still sprouting new fronds making it an even bigger plant. It is now more than three-feet tall and five-plus feet wide. It has more than doubled in size in four months. This large, bright green fern fills an empty space next to our front porch, beautifully. The area is somewhat protected from the wind and receives some dappled afternoon sun. To grow or overwinter this plant indoors, provide bright light and, importantly, LOTS of space

I learned this fern was offered because the wholesaler was unable to acquire the variety it wanted. I asked if it would be at the grocery store next spring. She could not answer that but promised to pass along my enthusiasm for the Macho fern.