

Stop 130 Kid's Tour – Fern House Overview

Hey! Where did all the *flowers* go? This little greenhouse is home to a group of plants called ferns. But even though they have roots, stems and leaves, ferns don't produce any flowers, fruit or even *seeds* for that matter! Ferns are some of the oldest living plants on earth. How old? Try more than 300 million years old! Giant tree ferns, like the one in the middle of this room, were around long before the dinosaurs showed up. (sfx: *dinosaur roar*)

So if ferns don't have any seeds, how do they reproduce? On many ferns, if you carefully look on the back of their leaves, or fronds as they're called, you'll see little bumps that look like a line of straight or even squiggly dots. Inside those protective cases are spores that the fern will eventually release onto the ground so that new ferns can grow. Ancient ferns evolved this way and adapted to live all over the world. Take a look around at all these different plant shapes and sizes. Maybe you have a fern growing at home that looks like one of the one's here.

Most ferns prefer growing in moist places like a woodland or rainforest. (sfx: *rainforest sounds*) That's why this room feels so warm and stuffy. Our overhead fogging system helps to keep it nice and humid so the ferns feel right at home. Do you see that small glass case? A hundred years ago, tropical ferns were so exotic that plant collectors kept them in display cases just like this one so they could show them off to all their friends!