

## Male Fern

*Dryopteris filix-mas* syn. *Aspidium filix-mas*

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Male Fern  
**Aspidium**  
 Bear's-paw  
 Knotty Brake  
 Shield Fern  
 Sweet Brake

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Male fern grows two to four feet tall. Pale green leaves, or fronds, are narrow and fringed, growing close together all the way up the stalk. Dark brown spores attach to the underside of the fronds in rows of two. The rhizomes are reddish brown, short, thick, and scaled.

One of the most potent remedies for tapeworm ever recorded in the annals of medicine, male fern was listed in the U.S. Pharmacopeia as late as 1965. From Greek antiquity down to the present day, male fern has been recommended for expelling tapeworms. Tapeworms know no social boundaries-even Louis XVI of France paid a kingly sum for a formula containing this drug.

The fern probably got the name bear's-paw from the rough, hairy appearance of the brown rhizomes. The genus name *Dryopteris* means "oak-fern" in Greek, because the plant often grows in oak forests. Botanists gave the plant its species name, *filix-mas* ("male fern"), because of its vigorous nature. (Another species, *Athyrium filix-femina*, or ladyfern, got its name for its delicate appearance.) It was not until the mid-1800's that botanists learned that ferns are neither "male" nor "female"; fern spores form small structures that produce both male and female cells. Because the spores cannot be seen by the naked eye, they were once believed to confer invisibility. Shakespeare alludes to this belief in *Henry IV*: "We have the receipt of fern-seed, we walk invisible."

Ferns reproduce from spores on the underside of their leaves. Many cultures consider the fern to have the power to make a person rich. In Russian myth, anyone who catches a fern blooming on Midsummer's Eve and throws it into the air will find treasure where it lands. According to Syrian legend, gathering fern spores on Christmas night will force the devil to give up money. The mysterious regeneration of ferns led to an ancient belief that the spores could confer invisibility to a person sprinkled with them. The fronds can be boiled and eaten as a vegetable. During times of famine in Norway, they were mixed with bread and brewed for beer.

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### PARTS USED

Frond, rhizome.

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### USES

For centuries people have used an oil extracted from the rhizome of the male fern to treat tapeworms and liver flukes. Researchers have determined that the chemicals filicin and filmarone found in the oil are toxic to the worms and that oleoresin paralyzes them and keeps them from attaching to the intestine. Male fern is extremely poisonous in high doses and should never be used in self-medication.

One of the most effective of all "worm herbs," male fern root, or the oleo-resin it yields, is a specific treatment for tapeworms. It acts by paralyzing the muscles of the worm, forcing it to relax its hold on the gut wall. Provided that the root is taken along with a no oily purgative -Dioscorides recommended scammony (*Convolvulus scammonia*) or black hellebore -it will flush out the parasites.



### HABITAT AND CULTIVATION

Male fern grows in all parts of Europe and in temperate parts of Asia and North America. Male fern thrives in dry terrain and in the fertile soil of woodlands and on rocky slopes.



### CONSTITUENTS

Male fern contains filicin, filixid acid, tannin, phloroglucin derivatives, traces of essential oil.



### COLLECTION

The rhizome is unearthed in the autumn.



### FATHER KUNZLE'S OIL

- 5 fern fronds, well dried
- 4/5 (200 ml) cup [olive](#) oil

Detach the dried leaflets from the stems and macerate in the oil for 1 month. Carefully strain. This oil can be kept for 6 months away from light. This is an ideal massage oil for muscular pain.



### LINKS

[http://www.herbs2000.com/herbs\\_male\\_fern.htm](http://www.herbs2000.com/herbs_male_fern.htm)



### Abacopteris

Ce nom a été donné par le botaniste Fée à cinq ou six espèces de Fougères qui croissent en Inde et en Polynésie. Les Abacopteris font partie de l'embranchement des Ptérophytes. Ils appartiennent à la famille des Thelypteridaceae, et comptent 600 espèces tropicales (Abacopteris Fee, Abacopteris triphylla -paku cabang tiga, en malais) Ce sont des **Apsidium** à pinnules étroites et complètement soudées par les bords. Leur nervation caractéristique est constituée par des nervilles qui forment des aréoles presque quadrilatères, à la manière des cases de damier.

<http://www.encyclopedie-universelle.com /abacatuia-abadis.html>

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