



Boston Fern

Nephrolepis exaltata 'Bostoniensis'

The classic parlour fern, and every one sold since 1894 descends from a single lucky sport. Arching fronds that soften a whole corner of a room.

Feeding When in doubt, skip the fertilizer, it causes brown tips

INDIRECT LIGHT

ROOM TEMP

LOVES HUMIDITY

EASY CARE

DAY TO DAY

Light	Medium bright — an east window, a few feet back from a west or south one, or behind a sheer curtain. From November to February you can move it right into a west or south window; filter the stronger spring and summer sun.
Water	Water thoroughly until it runs out the drainage holes, then let the surface feel dry before watering again. Use room-temperature water. Do not use softened water — the salt damages ferns. Never leave the pot sitting in water.
Food	Only when it is actively producing new fronds, or if the foliage looks paler than usual. Fish emulsion, or any houseplant food at half strength. Over-feeding is a leading cause of brown tips, so when in doubt, skip it.
Temperature	Normal room temperature. Nights around 18°C / 65°F are ideal; keep days below 35°C / 95°F.
Humidity	Ferns want humid air. Group plants together, use a pebble-and-water tray, or run a humidifier in winter. Do not rely on misting — it raises humidity for only a few minutes. Keep it away from heat vents.

WHEN THE FLOWERS FINISH

Never flowers. Keep the soil evenly moist, snip browned fronds at the base, and rinse or dust the foliage occasionally — dusty fronds harbour mites. Divide every few years in spring, or peg one of the wiry runners onto damp soil to start a new plant. Named cultivars will not come true from spores, so division and runners are the only way to reproduce your exact plant. Many people summer them outdoors in shade and bring them in before frost.

IF SOMETHING LOOKS WRONG

Brown dry frond tips and edges	Usually dry indoor air, especially in winter, or a spot too close to a heat vent or high near a ceiling. Raise humidity and move it lower and away from the vent.
Browning from the tips back, on a plant you feed regularly	Over-fertilizing and salt build-up. Stop feeding and flush the pot with plenty of plain water until it drains freely.
Constant shedding and yellowing with soggy soil	Root rot from a pot that cannot drain, or a decorative foil sleeve holding water.
Fine webbing, stippled fronds, brown bumps or white cottony spots	Spider mites, scale or mealybugs. Cut out badly infested fronds and rinse the plant.

GROWER REFERENCE

Production and finishing figures. If you are keeping this plant on a windowsill, everything you need is on page one — this page is for the trade.

Media pH	5.0–5.5.
Media EC	Below 1 dS/m indicates deficiency; 2 dS/m adequate; 3 dS/m or above requires reduction. Method: pour-through, every 2–3 weeks.
Substrate	50% peat, 25% perlite, 25% vermiculite by volume, giving 73% water-holding capacity by volume.
Fertilizer	150–175 ppm N constant liquid feed during establishment, rising to 175–200 ppm N in active growth; alternatively 250–300 ppm N once weekly. Use a 3-1-2 ratio complete fertilizer such as 9-3-6 or 18-6-12 with minors. UF/IFAS rates the crop at fertilization category 2–3, equal to 13–16 g N per sq ft per year. For interior maintenance, drop to category 1 (2 g N per sq ft per year) at 75–225 f.c.
Light	Production 1,500–3,000 f.c., best quality usually near 2,000 f.c. under 70–80% shade. Interior and retail 50–200 f.c., with 150 f.c. the minimum for long-term holding.
Temperature	Production 18–30°C / 65–86°F, optimum 24°C / 75°F. Interior 20–24°C / 68–75°F. No separate day/night split is published.
Relative humidity	Not established as a specific percentage. High RH is universally recommended; practice is to hold high humidity while maintaining air movement to limit foliar disease.
Irrigation	Hand-watering preferred during establishment; micro-tube for larger containers and baskets. Keep media evenly moist but not saturated, and water early so foliage dries. Avoid sodium-containing or softened water.

DISORDERS & PESTS

Published physiological disorders: graying, weak fronds, pale coloration, leaf tip burn and runner burn. Tip burn is typically high soluble salts or fluoride; graying and pale colour indicate excess light or nutrient imbalance. Also Rhizoctonia and Pythium root/crown rot, foliar nematode, scale, mealybug, spider mite.

GROWN BY

Boekestyn Greenhouses Inc.

2085 Fourth Ave, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 6P9, Canada

boekestyngreenhouses.com · hello@boekestyngreenhouses.com

Three generations of family growing since 1962.

The Boston fern was never bred — it was a chance mutation spotted in 1894 in a shipment of ordinary sword ferns sent from Philadelphia to Boston. Because its arching fronds will not come true from spores, every one sold since has been cloned from that single sport.

Sources

- UF/IFAS EP550, Nephrolepis production guide
- University of Minnesota Extension; UW–Madison Horticulture