



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Adiantum* spp.<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

This extremely fine-textured, delicate, airy fern is a graceful addition to shady, moist outdoor landscapes or bright, indirect light locations indoors. Its light grey-green, soft foliage adds a quieting feeling to any landscape, particularly around a water feature in the garden. It is best planted in mass on two to three-foot centers, but can be used as an edging or specimen in a small garden area. A North American native, Maidenhair Fern also makes an excellent groundcover, spreading easily by creeping stems.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Adiantum* spp.

**Pronunciation:** ad-ee-AN-tum species

**Common name(s):** Maidenhair Fern

**Family:** *Adiantaceae*

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** mass planting; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; edging

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

### Description

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet

**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

**Plant habit:** weeping; round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

**Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** orbiculate; ovate

**Leaf venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** no flowers

**Flower characteristic:** no flowers

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** no fruit

**Fruit length:** no fruit

**Fruit cover:** no fruit

**Fruit color:** no fruit

**Fruit characteristic:** no fruit

### Trunk and Branches

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-13, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable  
**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade  
**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; clay; sand; acidic; loam  
**Drought tolerance:**  
**Soil salt tolerances:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

### Other

**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### Use and Management

Needing above-average humidity, Maidenhair Fern grows in partial to full shade on well-drained soils with high organic matter but does not tolerate dry soil. The Southern Maidenhair and Brittle Maidenhair grow best in alkaline soils while others grow best in acid soils. It will cascade over the side of a container in a shady garden spot.

Some of the available species include: *Adiantum capillus-veneris*, Southern Maidenhair, 1.5 feet tall; *A. hispidulum*, Rosy Maidenhair, one-foot-tall, young fronds rosy brown; *A. pedatum*, Western Maidenhair, 1 to 2.5 feet tall, most popular one grown; and *A. peruvianum*, Silver Dollar Maidenhair, 1.5 feet or more tall, leaf-segments quite large, up to two inches wide.

Propagation is by division or spores.

Problems include scale, mites, mealy bugs, snails, and slugs, but are usually not serious.

### Pests and Diseases

Maidenhair Fern is susceptible to root rots in soil which is kept too wet.