



ARTILLERY FERN

One person's weed is another's house plant or ground cover

The **Artillery Fern** (*Pilea microphylla*), a ground hugging plant with dense, tiny glossy green foliage, got its name from its unusual dispersal of pollen. The green, inconspicuous male flowers burst the pollen into the air in an explosive-like manner. This Florida native (not a fern at all!) is a very hearty short-term perennial in SW FL, and an annual further north.

We see artillery fern mostly as a pest, a weed growing in between pavers, an unwanted presence in flower beds. But some people find it attractive enough to use as an ornamental in hanging baskets or terrariums. It will grow in full sun but prefers shade or a mix of both.

This plant has been used medicinally in Cuba, and some scientific testing of the compounds found in the plant show antibacterial and antioxidant potential. In Trinidad and Tobago it's used for childbirth and infertility. In China it's used to treat fluid retention, in Jamaica, asthma, and in Barbados, bowel disorders.