

FERNS

Ferns have been collected in the wild, and cultivated for centuries, but the famous (or notorious) fern craze was during the reign of Queen Victoria, from the second quarter of the nineteenth century into the first quarter of the twentieth. The mania petered out around the First World War.

Many ferns were gathered in the wild in Ireland and then grown by enthusiasts, and some – perhaps most, but, in any case, far too many! – were given fancy names. Again most of these no longer exist except as pressed specimens in herbaria, or as images in nature-printed books. Certainly they are not in Irish gardens. Writing in 1910, one of Ireland resident pteridomanicas, the Revd Dr. H. Kingsmill Moore (*Jr. gardening* 5 (1910): 28), explained some of the fascination of fern collecting:

One collector [Patrick Bernard O’Kelly] has been heard to say that he holds upwards of a thousand varieties of a single species – the common Hartstongue. Probably in such a case his friends would make inroads on the total, by banning many as “too much alike”. But the mere fact that such a collection is thought possible is enough to unfold long vistas of delight.

W. H. Phillips (*Proc. Belfast Nat. Field Club.* 1878-1879: 358-359) was even more rhapsodic and explicit:

One of the greatest charms about ferns is that they are spread so bountifully over the country, that they are available to those of limited time and means, and when found may be captured and cultivated. The hunter must have indomitable perseverance. Every nook, dell, rock, roadside hedge, and ditch must be examined thoroughly, so that nothing may escape the eye. The hunter should always be prepared with tools – a fern trowel, a naturalist’s pick to fasten on a walking-stick, a pocket knife, some string, and a good canvas bag with shoulder straps. These will enable any plant to be lifted and carried home.

It is difficult therefore to make a sensible list of cultivated ferns, and their myriad monstrosities and variations. The following catalogue is an mere attempt at a sample.

Taking just two works, E. J. Lowe’s *British ferns* (1908), and C. T. Druery’s *British ferns and their varieties* (1910), the following are ferns recorded from Ireland. (Plants marked with an asterisk (*) and printed in **bold** are treated in the main body of this catalogue.)

*Adiantum**capillus-veneris*

- ‘Footii’: near Ballyryan, The Burren, Co. Clare, F. J. Foot
- ‘Incisum Footii’: Co. Clare, F. J. Foot
- ‘Magnificum’: Co. Clare
- ‘Ramulosum’: Ireland

*Asplenium**adiantum-nigrum*

- ‘Angustatum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Grandiceps’ (FCC): 1865, Waterford; Rev R. Travers Smith
- ‘Lineare’: near Ballyvaghan, The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly

marinum

- ‘Hookeri’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Laxum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, F. J. Foot

ruta-muraria

- ‘Attenuatum’: Athlone, Co. Westmeath, F. J. Foot
- ‘Pinnatum’: Killarney, Co. Kerry, Dr Allchin

trichomanes

- ‘Congestum’: Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Laciniatum’ (‘Incisum Laciniatum’): 1863, Co. Clare, A.

Stansfield

- ‘O’Kellyi’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Polydactylum’ (‘Cristatum’): Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Triangulare’: 1863, Co. Clare, Mr. Stansfield

*Athyrium**filix-femina*

- ‘Abasilobum’: Ballywalter, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
- ‘Abasiphyllum’: Ireland, Revd C. Padley
- ‘Congestum Minus’: Ireland, Mr. Riley
- ‘Crispum’
- ‘Cristatum Kilrushensis’: Kilrush, Co. Clare, C. T. Druery (ref: *Br. fern gaz.* 2 (1913): 41).
- ‘Cruciato-multifidum’: 1880, Castlerock, Co. Derry, A. J. Praeger
- ‘Cruciato-reflexum’: Castlerock, Co. Derry, A. J. Praeger
- ‘Depauperatum’: Ben Bulbin, Co. Sligo, J. Gunning.
- ‘Elegans’: Duneight, Co. Antrim, Revd W. D. Pouden
- * **‘Frizelliae’**: 1857, Castle Kevin, Co. Wicklow, Mrs C. Frizell; Carrablagh, Co. Donegal, H. C. Hart.
- ‘Gracile’: Inch, Co. Down, Revd W. D. Pouden; Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips
- ‘Laxo-cristatum’: Ballynahinch Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
- ‘Medio-deficiens Caudiculatum’: Ireland, W. H. Phillips
- ‘Phillipsii’ (‘Cruciato-pinnula Phillips’: 1864, Holywood, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips (ref: *Proc. Belfast Nat. Field Club.* 1878-1879: 359)).
- ‘Phillipsii’ (‘Congestum Phillips’): 1888, Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips
- ‘Plumosum’: Co. Kerry, Mr. Tyermann
- ‘Plumosum Pouden’: Co. Antrim, Rev. Pouden
- ‘Praegeri’: 1880, Castlertock, Co. Derry, A. J. Praeger
- ‘Reflexo-multifidum’: 1880, Castlerock, Co. Derry, A. J. Praeger

*Blechnum**spicant*

- ‘Aitkenianum’: Co. Clare, A. Stansfield
- ‘Foliosum’: Mourne Mountains, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
- ‘Interrupto-trinervia’: 1878, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
- ‘Kinahanii’: Ireland, Mr. Kinahan

*Botrychium**lunaria*

- ‘Tripartitum’: Co. Dublin, Dr. Kinahan

*Ceterach**officinarum*

- ‘Angustatum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Bifidum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Crenatum-major’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Crenatum-minor’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Crispum-major’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Cristatum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Cristatum Grandiceps’: Ireland, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Decorum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Densum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Densum-variens’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Depauperatum’: Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny, Col. Buchanan
- ‘Giganteum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Grandiceps’ (= ? ‘Cristatum Grandiceps’): The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Interruptum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Kalon’: near Athlone, Colonel A. S. H. Lowe
- ‘Lineare-major’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Majus’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Multifido-cristatum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Ramoso-cristatum’: Co. Clare, A. Wise
- ‘Subpinnatum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Superbum’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly
- ‘Tenuifolium’: The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O’Kelly

- 'Truncatum': The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
- Cystopteris fragilis*
'Lineare': The Burren, Co. Clare, Prtck B. O'Kelly
- Dryopteris aemula*
'Angustipinnulum': Co. Antrim, David Moore; Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
- filix-mas*
'Confluens': Ligoniel, Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips
'Monstrosum': Holywood, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Pluma': Newcastle, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Rotundatum': Ligoniel, Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips
- Hymenophyllum tunbridgense*
'Latifolium': Narrowwater, Co. Donw, R. Ll. Praeger
- wilsonii*
'Kinahani' (FCC): 1870, mountains of Co. Galway, R. Kinahan
- Oreopteris limbosperma* (= *Lastraea montana*)
'Revolvens': Newcastle, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
- Osmunda regalis*
'Phillipsii': Co. Fermanagh, W. H. Phillips
'Rotundata': Ireland, W. H. Phillips
- Phyllitis scolopendrium**
'Alto-lobatum': Carron, The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Angustato-nitifum': Lower Commons, The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Crispatum': The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Erosum': Muckinish, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Fosteri': 1876, Ireland, Mr Foster (of Manchester)
'Imbricatum': Roundstone variety; Roundstone, Co. Galway
'Lutescens O'Kelly' ('O'Kellyi'): Carron, The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Malcomsonae': Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Miss Malcomson
'O'Kellyi' ('Truncatum'): Black Head, The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Peraferens': Ireland, Dr Allchin; Ballygarth, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Peraferum' ('Peraferens Variegatum'): Collin Glen, Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips 'Magnum':
'Phillipsii': Co. Fermanagh, W. H. Phillips
'Rugosum': Ireland, Dr Allchin
'Sclateri' ('Sagittato-projectum Sclater'): 1860, Co. Sligo, Capt. Sclater
'Uncinatum': 1863, Co. Clare, A. Stansfield
'Varians': Ballaganor, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
- * 'Viviparum' ('Cristato Viviparum O'Kelly'; 'Cristatum Proliferum', '**Cristatum O'Kelly**'): Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Westroppii' ('Sagittato-projectum Westropp'): Aran Islands, Co. Galway, Mr Westropp.
- Polypodium vulgare** agg. (including *P. australe*, etc.)
'Crenatum': Carberry island, near Athlone, Col. A. S. H. Lowe
- * 'Cristatum Clewarth' ('Fosteri'): 1876, Co. Clare = * '**Grandiceps Foster**'
- * '**Cristatum**': 1854, Monkstown, Co. Cork, H. S. Perry
'Lomarioides': Ireland, Mr Stewartson
- * '**Macrostachyon**': Carron, The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
- 'Rotundatum': Ireland, P. B. O'Kelly; W. H. Phillips
- * '**Semilacerum Falcatum O'Kelly**': Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
- * '**Semilacerum Grande**': 1862, Co. Wicklow
- * '**Semilacerum Lowe**i': Athlone, Co. Westmeath, Col. Lowe
'Truncatum': Ireland, Dr Allchin
- Polystichum lonchitis**
'Confertum': Ireland
- setiferum**
'Angustatum Phillipsii': Castlereagh, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Crawfordianum' ('Proliferum Crawfordianum'): Crawford Park, W. H. Phillips [is this 'Divisilobum Crawfordiae']
'Crawfordianum' ('Trucatum Praeger'): 1886, Crawfordsburn, Co. Down, Mr. Praeger
'Cristulum' ('Cristatum Stormount no. 1'): 1883, Stormount, Co. Down, Mr. Praeger
'Cuneatum' ('Setoso-cuneatum'): 1877, Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips
'Decompositum Phillips': Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Decompositum Crawfordianum': Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Decompositum Laxum Phillips': Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Divisilobum Laxum Phillips Jones' ('Phillipsii'): Castlecoole, Co. Fermanagh, W. H. Phillips: 'a gem of the first water'.
- * '**Divisilobum Crawfordiae**': Crawfordsburn, Co. Down, a labourer
'Downense': Fermebrogni, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Exile': Holywood, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Footii' ('Proliferum Footii'): Co. Clare, F. J. Foot
'Glenarmense' ('Interruptum Glenarm'): 1884, Glenarm, Co. Antrim, Mr. Praeger
'Gormanstownense': Gormanstown, Co. Meath, W. H. Phillips
'Gracile': Castlecoole, Co. Fermanagh, W. H. Phillips
'Grandiceps Talbot': 1861, Co. Cork, W. Talbot (a student at Glasnevin Botanic Gardens)
'Inaequale': Glen Devis, Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips
'Interrupto-caudatum': 1885, Glenarm, Co. Antrim, Mr. Praeger
'Irregulare': Ballmenoch, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Laxo-cristatum Praeger': Castle Dobbs, Co. Antrim,

Mequale Bramel, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'O'Kellyi': The Burren, Co. Clare, P. B. O'Kelly
'Padleyi': 1862, Vale of Avoca, Co. Wicklow, Revd C. Padley
'Phillipsii' ('Brachiatum'): Stormont, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Phillipsii' ('Capitatum'): Glendeviss, Co. Antrim, W. H. Phillips
'Phillipsii' ('Cristatum'): 1870, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Phillipsii' ('Acutilobum'): Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Phillipsii' ('Interruptum Phillips'): 1876, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Phillipsii' ('Exile Phillips'): Holywood, Co. Down, W. H. Phillips
'Polydactylum': 1857, Co. Tipperary
'Praegeri': 1883, Holywood, Co. Down, Mr Praeger
'Praegeri' ('Cristatum Castle Dobbs'): 1884, Castle Dobbs, Mr Praeger
'Praegeri' ('Tripinnatum Praeger'): 1886, Dundonald, Co. Down, Mr Praeger
'Praegeri' ('Acutum Praeger'): 1882, Dundonald, Co. Down, Mr Praeger

'Praegeri' ('Grandidens'): 1881, Craigavad, Co. Down,
Mr Praeger

'Proliferum Crawfordianum' = '**Divisilobum
Crawfordiae**'

'Proliferum Footii': Co. Clare, F. J. Foot

'Ramulosum': near Belfast, J. Stansfield or Co. Antrim,
W. H. Phillips

'Rotundatum Phillips': Ligoneil, Co. Antrim, W. H.
Phillips 'a splendid rotundate form' (**ref:** *Proc.
Belfast Nat. Field Club.* 1878-1879: 359).

'Subcristatum': 1885, Castle Dobbs, Co. Antrim, Mr
Praeger

'Subimbricatum': Springfield, W. H. Phillips

'Truncatum': Ireland, R. Ll. Praeger

Pteridium

aquilinum

(variegated): Ireland, W. H. Phillips

Trichomanes

speciosum

'Alatum' (FCC): Ireland, A. Clapham

* '**Andrewsii**' (= var. *andrewsii*): Ireland, W. Andrews

'Crispum' (FCC): 1852, Killarney, Co. Kerry, Col. A. S. H.
Lowe

'Cuneatum': sent to Lowe in 1870 by Mr Kinahan,
Roebuck Park, Dublin.

* '**Dilatatum**': Ireland, Mr. Backhouse (introduced by
Backhouse of York)

* '**Proliferum**': Killarney, Co. Kerry.

Postscript. J. R. Kinahan of Dublin made a notable contribution to the cataloguing of fern varieties, even proposing a system of classification and nomenclature. 'Many authors', he wrote, 'inveigh against the study of these monstrosities, saying its arises from a depraved and puerile taste; yet the student of morphology must deem them interesting, since it is by the exception the rule is best shown.' (*Phytologist* 4 (1853): 892)