



**Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY**



Northern Holly Fern (*Polystichum lonchitis*) –Flourishing fern of the Escarpment



Photo : Allison watt

Did you Know?

It is a rare species in Great Britain.

The common name is derived from the fact that it resembles the Holly shrub.

It is often associated with limestone/dolostone features.

Most of the Ontario population is found in Grey and Bruce counties.

Habitat – Rocky crevices and shallow limestone soil of talus slopes under deciduous or mixed forest canopies.

Size – 25 – 60 cm tall

Range – Northern hemisphere from North America to Eurasia and along the western american coast to California

Status – S5, Secure



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Identification:

A glossy, rigid fern with tufts of green blades ranging from 20 to 60 cm long . The fronds are linear and once divided tapering into a point. Each pinnae also terminate into a sharp bristly spine giving the plant the “Holly” look. It can be easily confused with Christmas Fern.

Photo : 2012 Brian Popelier

Northern Holly Fern on the Niagara Escarpment

This fern is a common sight in the forests along the Escarpment especially as you travel into the northern sections. BTC ecologists often come across carpets of this green fern covering the dolostone boulders and talus slopes on numerous properties owned by the BTC. In the winter months the bright evergreen fronds poke through the white snow to produce a striking contrast of colour.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is continually acquiring and protecting land along the Niagara Escarpment, often including land that contains significant Escarpment features that are perfect habitat for the Northern Holly Fern.