



EDUCATE

DESIGN

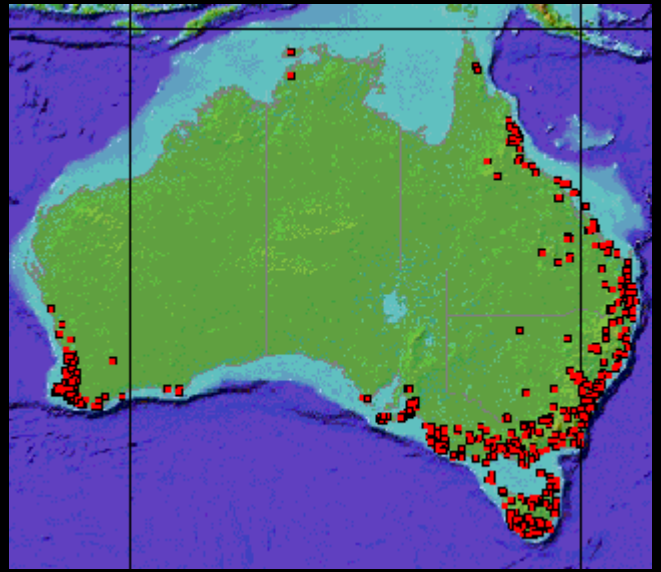
CONSULT



Photo Courtesy DPI NSW

Bracken

Pteridium esculentum



Courtesy of Australian virtual herbarium

Description: A large, dark green, vigorous, leathery and invading fern with 'Christmas tree' shaped fronds. Produces toxins that retard the growth and germination of other species.

As A Soil Indicator: Very low Calcium, High Potassium, High Zinc, High Aluminum Very little organic matter, More common in Sandy or well drained soils.

Life cycle: Perennial. Spores germinate in ash beds and complete the sexual portion of their life. Asexual ferns form and produce patches. Shading or allelopathy (the production of toxins) usually eliminates other plants within the patches. New fronds emerge from underground rhizomes in spring, and mature over summer. These fronds die in winter (usually after frost) and fall, smothering other plants. Patches spread about 1 m per year.

Beneficial: Apparently used for Aboriginal and Maori food, bedding, thatch,

Detrimental: Produces toxins that retard the growth and germination of other species.

Toxicity: Toxic to sheep, pigs, people and especially horses and cattle when eaten in large quantities. Green fronds are most toxic, but dead fronds and rhizomes are also toxic. Hay containing Bracken can be toxic

Legislation: The Wildlife Conservation Act prohibits the removal of this species from natural stands on government land.