

## Royal Fern

**Regno:** flora

Riparian and marsh woods

 [osmundaregalis.jpg](#) [1]

### Royal Fern - *Osmunda regalis*

Magnificent large fern characterised by a thick underground rhizome giving a tuft of 2-pinnate fronds up to two metres tall.

It has distinct sterile and fertile fronds. The former have large, lanceolate pinnules, usually opposite but sometimes alternate, the latter are all concentrated on the apical portion and are transformed into a sort of panicle composed of much smaller pinnules covered with green sporangia, which turn a rust colour as they ripen.

The Royal Fern belongs to a very old genus, found as a fossil as far back as the Tertiary layers. It can be recognised from the other ferns by special primitive characters, for example the sporangia have no protective membrane and all ripen at the same time. It lives in damp woods, on acid soils often at the foot of the European Alder.

In Italy it is still fairly common in the northern and Tyrrhenian regions but rare or absent in the eastern and Adriatic side of the peninsular.

This seems to confirm the plant's preference for a wet Atlantic type of climate. It is still common in the Sphagnum bog at Sibolla but is declining on the banks in the marshland areas.

On the eastern Fucecchio Marshes, it is still possible to admire a splendid *Osmunda* stand growing on a small island in the Ramone Marshlet. It also occurs in the hygrophilous Alder woods in the Bientina Marshes (at Tanali), at Mount Pisano and the Cerbaie Hills.

**Source URL:** <http://www.zoneumidetoscane.it/en/royal-fern>

#### Links:

[1] <http://www.zoneumidetoscane.it/sites/default/files/osmundaregalis.jpg>