

fragile fern *Cystopteris protrusa*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Pteridophyta

Class: Filicopsida

Order: Polypodiales

Family: Dryopteridaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The fragile fern is a small, green fern. Each of its fronds is about 10 inches long and three inches wide with approximately 12 pairs of leaflets. The stipe may be upright or along the ground. The stipe is shorter than the length of the frond and is easily broken near its base. Because of this trait the fragile fern is also known as the brittle fern. The stipe is yellow-brown or green toward the frond, shading to dark brown or black near the base.

BEHAVIORS

The fragile fern may be found statewide in Illinois. It grows in upland forest along ledges and around rocks. Spore production occurs from June through September. The fragile fern often grows in early spring and early fall, dying back in summer.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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