CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY FERN STUDY KIT

What ferns should students learn?

Kindergarten: maidenhair, goldback, bracken and sword fern
First grade add: California polypody, 5 finger fern
Second grade add: chain fern, wood fern
Third grade add: birdsfoot, coffee fern
Fourth grade add: serpentine fern, lady fern
Fifth grade add: deer fern, leather fern
Sixth grade add: bead fern, Carlotta Hall's fern

All ferns are actual size, but some like the sword fern I picked small to fit on the page.

Points to notice:

Sword ferns have a "hilt" near the stem.
Wood ferns have horse shoe shaped sori. (Sori are where the spores are on the underside of the leaf.)

Interesting fern facts

Native Americans used the black stems of maidenhair fern in their basketry.
Serpentine ferns grow only where there are serpentine rocks.
Goldback ferns have a powder on the back that will make a print on dark colored clothing. You don't need to pick the fern. Just hold your sleeve under the fern and make the print.
Woodwardia was named for the English botanist T.J. Woodward.
Many people call California polypody licorice fern. Licorice fern is the same genus, but a different species (though the two do hybridize). Licorice fern is a fern of the deep woods. I have included California polypody because it's more common.
Bracken has been used as a worm medicine and an astringent. Young leaves can be eaten, though older plant tissues may be poisonous. Early California settlers used bracken as thatch for summer shelters.
Five finger fern isn't as common as most of the others. You can see it along the stream if you take Woodpecker Trail from Bear Valley Headquarters at Point Reyes.
BRACKEN FERN
CALIFORNIA POLYPODY
5 FINGER FERN
CHAIN FERN (ALSO CALLED WOODWARDIA)
WOOD FERN
BIRDSFOOT FERN

COFFEE FERN
LADY FERN
DEER FERN
COASTAL LIP or BEAD FERN (magnified)

CARLOTTA HALL'S FERN (magnified)