

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

October 2025

Sometimes, normal things have very fantastical names. The resurrection fern may sound like something out of a TV show, however, it is a plant that exists in the real world, and there is a good chance you have come across it.

The resurrection fern is the most widespread epiphyte plant in North America. This fern is found throughout the Southeast, as far north as New York and as far west as Texas ([Resurrection Fern, n.d.](#)). Epiphytes are plants that grow on other plants or objects for physical support rather than in the soil. Unlike some other epiphytes, like vines, resurrection ferns do not steal water from other plants. This fern mostly grows on trees, but will also grow on certain rocks ([Pleopeltis Michauxiana, n.d.](#)). Its name comes from the fact that this fern sometimes appears to die in periods of dryness and then is "resurrected" again when it is moistened. The resurrection fern can lose 97% of its water without dying, while most plants can only lose around 10% of their water. They reproduce by spores, not seeds ([Resurrection Fern, n.d.](#)).

Its scientific name is *Pleopeltis michauxiana*, although it was once called *Pleopeltis polypodioides* ([Weakley, 2015](#)). Unlike some of the plants in the THPO's Collections, the resurrection fern does have historic uses. The Seminoles used this fern in mixtures to treat chronic sickness and certain kinds of mental problems. They also used it for certain medicines used in childbirth (Austin 2004).



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