Java Fern

Microsorium Pteropus (Java Fern) is one of the most popular aquarium plants. Its easy care and undemanding requirements make it the perfect plant for any hobbyist. Java Fern is composed of three different parts. Its roots are dark brown and stick to most substrate. Attached to a rock or a piece of driftwood, the roots will soon develop and anchor the plant. The rhizome is located between the roots and the leaves. It is the most sensitive part of the plant that grows the slowest. If planted directly in a soft substrate as sand or gravel, the rhizome should not be buried as it will rot and make the plant die. The leaves are dark green and are quite hardy. Some little black spots can be noticed on the leathery leaves. Different opinions have been expressed regarding their cause. Some affirm they come from nutrient deficiency and other think they would play a role in the reproduction of this plant.

The roots must be left loose in the water. A good way to grow this plant is to attach it to a piece of rock or driftwood. Use fishing line or a rubber band to secure the rhizome to rocks or driftwood. After a few months, the rubber band could be removed as the roots will have anchor themselves to the substrate. Roots grow long and fast. Because Java Fern absorb nutrients through its leaves and roots, it is not recommended to bury the roots in the gravel. Reproduction of this plant is done by new plants growing at the tip of the mother plant. After a while, the new plants will develop roots and as they grow bigger, they separate from their mother to float at the surface of the tank. In the wild, new born Java Fern anchor itself to a piece of substrate while being transported with the water current of the streams. In aquariums, hobbyists simply attach it themselves to a new piece of substrate, rock or wood. Cuttings can be also done by separating the rhizome.

As stated before, Java Fern is quite easy to cultivate. Water conditions are not really important as this plant will grow in tap water as well as in more fragile fish environment. Some hobbyists even grow it in brackish water aquariums. Fertilizer and CO2 addition are not requirements either but will definitely make the plant thrive.

Lighting levels can oscillate from low to high. Java Fern will grow in dimmed water. It is therefore often found in shaded waters tanks where fish do not like high level of lighting. Although low lighting levels are accepted by this plant, strong lighting will have it thrive. In good water conditions and plenty of light, it is not unusual to see this plant breath with tiny oxygen bubbles coming out of its leaves.

Several varieties of Java Fern are known. Some popular varieties are Microsorium Pteropus Tropica, Microsorium Pteropus, Microsorium Pteropus narrow leaf and Microsorium Pteropus Windelov.

Java Fern is therefore a very attractive plant, suitable for most aquariums and hobbyists. Its undemanding lighting levels and its easiness to care are very useful for breeding tanks. This plant does also quite good in more aggressive fish tanks. Its hardy leaves and roots make it somewhat resistant to vegetarian fish. So i hope you have a chance to find the tough beautiful aquarium plant and have it in your tanks.