

Peppy Plants May 2013

by Eleanor Bennett

Pteridium esculentum, commonly known as Bracken is the only fern found at Peppy Beach (see also [Pteridium esculentum](#)). It is common in moist soil, typically along stream banks and swampy areas. It extends from Moora in the north, east to Cape Arid and is found in all Australian states as well as New Zealand. **Pteridium** is derived from the Greek *ptēris* meaning a kind of fern and **esculentum** from the Latin *esculentus* meaning good to eat. *Pteridium esculentum* has a long black, underground rhizomes (modified stem) resulting in dense clumps of this plant. It has erect fronds up to 2m long with a long hairless stalk. The dark green, leathery fronds are divided 3 or 4 times. The undersurface of the frond is paler in colour than the upper surface. Typically the upper surface is without hairs but the lower surface has scattered brown hairs. The spore cases (sori) are continuous along the lower frond edge but are not readily seen as they are hidden under the recurved margin.



Clump of *Pteridium esculentum*.



The undersurface of the frond is a paler colour than the upper surface.



The leathery frond is dark green on the upper surface. This photograph also shows how the frond is branched.



The brown colouration along the frond and where it joins the main frond stalk is dense, rusty coloured hairs.



The spore cases (sori) occur in a continuous row along the margin of the under surface of each leaf segment.