POLYPODIACEAE

Pteridium aquilinum (L.) Kuhn in von der Decken

bracken fern

FORM: Medium to large, erect fern, 5-20dm (2-7ft) tall; vigorously clonal, from deep, branched rhizomes having two light-colored external stripes and distinctive vascular bundles in cross-section.

LEAVES: Deciduous but with a firm, leatherlike feel, tripinulate blade 3-10dm (1-3ft) long with alternate, sessile pinnules, edges rolled under and hairy below, petiole erect, hairy and nonspiny, generally shorter than blade.

SORI: Protected by narrow inrolled indusial leaf margins (1).

ENEMIES: Fire: resistant, regeneration from rhizomes within 1-2 years to preburn levels.

NOTES: Allelopathic to other plant species, and a very aggressive invader of disturbed sites. Reported to contain carcinogenic compounds and is poisonous to livestock.