

CHAPTER I :
INTRODUCTION

Pteridophytes are the cryptogamic plants which grow under certain defined conditions of environment. Here the light is diffused, moisture level is higher and low temperatures prevail. Thus pteridophytes are well adapted to low light and moist conditions. They show diversity in habit and habitat. Most of them are herbaceous, few are shrubby and a very few are tree like. Majority of the members are terrestrial, a few are epiphytic as well as aquatic. Ferns in particular, dominate the pteridophytic flora. Ferns also grow in varied conditions of environment like terrestrial, epiphytic and aquatic. Leaves of ferns are typical and they bear the reproductive structures. In some ferns the vegetative leaves at a later stage bear reproductive structures and accordingly they are then called as reproductive leaves or sporophylls. In the ferns showing dimorphism of leaves, sterile leaves and fertile leaves are different. So, it is interesting to know the physiology and biochemistry of ferns during their vegetative and reproductive stage. Hence, in the present investigation an attempt has been made to study the physiology and biochemistry of two ferns viz. Nephrolepis exaltata Schott. and Gymnopteris contaminans Bedd..

