

AMERICAN BIRD'S NEST FERN

Asplenium serratum L.

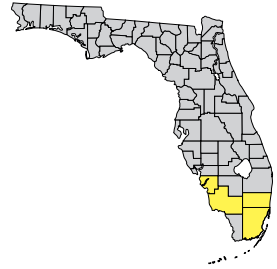
Synonyms: none

Family: Aspleniaceae (spleenwort)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S1

Legal Status: US–none FL–Endangered

Wetland Status: US–FACW FL–UPL



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Fern with numerous upright, unlobed leaves, 1 - 2.5 feet long, usually growing in a rosette on tree branches; leaf margins finely toothed; veins conspicuous and parallel. Sporangia in linear sori paralleling veins on underside of upper half of leaf. The common name derives from the mass of brown, hairy, fibrous roots at the base of the plant.

Similar Species: This fern is unique in FL, potentially confused in the wild only with narrow strap fern (*Campyloneurum angustifolium*), also described in this guide. It also resembles a cultivated species, Old World bird's nest fern (*Asplenium nidus*), which is grown in greenhouses.

Related Rare Species: Although very different in appearance, this species is closely related to several other rare ferns. See in this guide modest spleenwort (*Asplenium verecundum*), slender spleenwort (*Asplenium dentatum*), and single-sorus spleenwort (*Asplenium monanthes*).

American birds's nest fern

Asplenium serratum

Habitat: Fallen logs, stumps, and tree trunks in cypress swamps and tropical rockland hammocks.

Best Survey Season: All year.

Range-wide Distribution: FL, W. Indies, Mexico, Central and South America.

Conservation Status: Habitat destruction and plant poaching have severely reduced this fern's range in Florida. Found in 6 parks and preserves, it is still vulnerable to fern collectors.

Protection & Management: Enforce plant protection laws and prosecute plant poachers. Purchase and protect rockland habitats. Preserve natural hydrology and fire regimes of wetlands.

References: Coile 2000, FNA 1993, IRC 1999, Lellinger and Evans 1985, Nauman 1986, Nelson 2000, Ward 1979, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000b.

