

BRITTLE MAIDENHAIR FERN

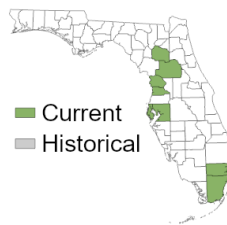
Adiantum tenerum Sw.

Synonyms: none

Family: Pteridaceae (maidenhair fern)

FNAI Ranks: G5/S3

Legal Status: US-none FL-Endangered



Leaves bright-green, glabrous, and delicate. Leaflets 0.5-3 cm long, 0.3-3 cm wide. Stalk blackish-brown color. Growing in a mesic hammock at Okaloacoochee Slough Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

Field Description: Petioles and rachises glabrous; leaves longer than broad, pinnately divided, with a main central axis, not fanlike; ultimate segments rhombic, about as long as broad (usually 0.7-1.3× as long as broad); leaflets 0.5-3 cm long, 0.5-3 cm wide; blackish-brown color of the stalks ending abruptly at the base of the ultimate segments in a cupule-like swelling (use at least 10× magnification).

Similar Species: Common maiden-hair fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*) can be separated by the blackish-brown color of the stalks extending into the base of the ultimate segments, making 1 or 2 dichotomous branchings before fading to green.

Related Rare Species: Common maiden-hair fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*) can be separated by the blackish-brown color of the stalks extending into the base of the ultimate segments, making 1 or 2 dichotomous branchings before fading to green (vs. blackish-brown color of the stalks ending abruptly at the

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base of the ultimate segments in a cupule-like swelling (use at least 10× magnification) for brittle maidenhair fern (*A. tenerum*)).

Habitat: On limestone outcrops, soil over limestone or limestone sinkholes. Found on upland hardwood forest stream banks and also within rockland hammocks and mesic hammocks.

Best Survey Season: All year.

Range-wide Distribution: N. FL (Alachua and St. Johns counties) south to s. FL; West Indies; Mexico, Central America south to n. South America.

Conservation Status: Occurs in scattered locations throughout the FL peninsula but is rare, typically occurring on limestone outcrops within sinkholes and limestone outcrops or calcareous soils within mesic hammocks.

Protection and Management: Protect mesic hammocks and rockland hammocks with limestone outcrops and sinkholes. Eradicate existing populations of invasive plant species and protect hammocks from deleterious hog rooting.

References: Weakley et al. 2023, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011



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