

AMERICAN BIRD'S NEST FERN

Asplenium serratum L.

Synonyms: none

Family: Aspleniaceae (spleenwort)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Gill Nelson

Field Description: Fern with numerous upright, unlobed **leaves**, 0.2 - 0.4 m 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*), American toothed spleenwort (*Asplenium dentatum*), and single-sorus spleenwort (*Asplenium monanthes*).

Habitat: Moist hammocks and swamps; epiphytic on logs, stumps, and humus piles, rarely on rocks.

Best Survey Season: All year.

American bird's nest fern

Asplenium serratum

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 and 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.

