

GIANT SWORD FERN

Nephrolepis biserrata (Sw.) Schott

Synonyms: none

Family: Nephrolepidaceae (sword fern)

FNAI Ranks: G5/S3

Legal Status: US-none FL-Threatened

Wetland Status: US-FACW-+ FL-FAC



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Field Description: A large fern with once-pinnate fronds. Mature leaves have pinnae longer than 5 cm and with conspicuous hairs on the surface. Sori are covered by a peltate to horseshoe-shaped indusium with a narrow sinus.

Similar Species: There are four to five *Nephrolepis* species in Florida (plus one hybrid), all very similar in appearance and habitat. However, only two species have fronds with un-forked pinnae over 5 cm long – the rare (state-threatened) giant sword fern and the FLEPPC Category I invasive exotic Asian sword fern. The two can be distinguished most easily by the presence of dark brown, lanceolate, appressed scales with pale margins present on the base of the leaf stalk of Asian sword fern.

Related Rare Species: None in FL.

Habitat: Swamps and wet hammocks; sometimes epiphytic.

giant sword fern

Nephrolepis biserrata

Best Survey Season: Spores present all year.

Range-wide Distribution: Florida, Mexico, West Indies, Central America, South America, Africa, and southeast Asia.

Conservation Status: State-threatened and tracked as vulnerable, this species is vouchered from 8 counties in south Florida.

Protection and Management: Control invasive exotic species in swamps and hammocks. Avoid hydrology alterations.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.