

COMB POLYPODY

Pecluma ptilodon ssp. *caespitosum* (Kunze)

M.G. Price

Synonyms: *Polypodium pectinatum* L. var. *caespitosum* Jenman; *Pecluma ptilodon* (Kunze)

M.G. Price var. *bourgeauana* (E. Fournier) A.R. Smith; ; *Pecluma bourgaeana* (E. Fournier) L.A. Triana; *Pecluma bourgeauana* (E. Fournier) L.A. Triana; *Pecluma ptilodon* (Kunze) M.G. Price var. *caespitosum* (Jenman) Lellinger

Family: Polypodiaceae (polypody)

FNAI Ranks: G5?TNR/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Pecluma ptilodon

Gil Nelson



Pecluma plumula

Gil Nelson



Pecluma dispersa

Gil Nelson

Field Description: Fern with erect or arching **fronds**; blade 2.5 - 0.9 m long, tapering at top and bottom, cut nearly to the midrib into 20 - 25 pairs of narrow, lance-shaped **leaflets**, each with a dark **midvein**. Lowest **leaflets** gradually reduced to small segments; **sori** on undersides of leaflets, oval. Rachis brown with no, or only filiform, scales. **Leaf stalks** brown.

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Similar Species: Resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis polypodioides*) is common on live oak branches; it has wider, rounded leaf segments, not cut to the middle of the blade, with many round, 2-colored scales on the undersurface of the leaflets. Ebony spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*) has short, broad, slightly toothed leaflets with small "ears" at the base and with narrow, angled sori; it is terrestrial, usually found in disturbed areas. Sword ferns (*Nephrolepis* spp.) have dark midribs and widely separated, toothed leaflets with "ears" at the base.

Related Rare Species: Two other polypody ferns are state-endangered. Widespread polypody (*Pecluma dispersa*) has black leaf stalks with lowest leaflets very small and angled backwards from the other leaflets; sori round or oval. Plume polypody (*Pecluma plumula*) leaves are often drooping and have black leaf stalks; lower leaf segments abruptly reduced to lobes; sori round. Swamp plume polypody also differs from the two other species of *Pecluma* in Florida in having absent or inconspicuous, filiform scales on the rachis (vs. conspicuous and not filiform). Swamp plume polypody prefers tree bases or old stumps or logs, while the other two species of *Pecluma* are more commonly found on live oaks or limestone outcrops.

Habitat: Floodplain forests, moist hammocks, and swamps; terrestrial or epiphytic on tree bases, occasionally on rocks.

Best Survey Season: Spring-fall; identifiable all year

Range-wide Distribution: Peninsular Florida from Clay County south to Monroe County. Also known from the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America.

Conservation Status: Habitat for all three *Pecluma* species has been greatly reduced by drainage, logging, and development. Once widespread in peninsular FL, there are few recently observed or protected populations of any of these ferns.

Protection and Management: Swamp plume polypody is sensitive to fire and dependent on maintenance of natural hydrology. Hand pull exotic species posing threat to swamp plume polypody: Chinese brake fern (*Pteris vittata*), cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), and sword fern (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*). Avoid disturbances to substrate.

References: Chafin, L.G. 2000, FNA 1993, Nelson, G. 2000, Wunderlin, R.P. and B.F. Hansen. 2000, Coile 2000, Evans 1969, FNA 1993, IRC 1999, IRC 2000, Lellinger and Evans 1985, Price 1983, Wunderlin 1998.

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