

# *Nephrolepis acutifolia*

## Family:

Nephrolepidaceae

## Botanical name

*Nephrolepis acutifolia* (Desv.) Christ

Link to Australian Plant Name Index for publication details and synonyms:

<https://id.biodiversity.org.au/name/apni/81960>

## Common name:

Sword Fern or Fishbone Fern

## Description

Stolons and basal portions of stipes densely covered with lanceolate rusty-brown scales; scales sometimes with marginal cilia. Fronds to 1.7 m long, when young with a woolly indumentum of pale scales, each consisting of a small rounded base with 1 longer and several shorter hair-like processes. Pinnae coriaceous with prominent white hydathodes in a marginal row, sometimes with a blunt basal auricle; margins entire or slightly undulate. Sterile pinnae 10–60 mm long, 10–14 mm wide; apex rounded. Fertile pinnae to 80 mm long; apex acute. Sori marginal, linear, continuous or interrupted; indusium attached along the inner side.

## Distribution

Occurs in NE QLD from Iron Range to Cape Capricorn, usually at low altitudes, NT and N WA. Also scattered across the Palaeotropics.

## Habit and habitat

Epiphytic, lithophytic or occasionally terrestrial in rainforest. This species commonly inhabits *Drynaria* and *Platyserium* clumps with large specimens observed in palm swamp, mangroves and riparian rainforest at low altitudes.

## Natural history

An attractive ornamental fern.

## Cultivation

Readily cultivated in a hanging container or a nest-epiphyte in tropical gardens. Slower to establish than other *Nephrolepis*.

## Similar species

*Nephrolepis acutifolia* can be distinguished from all other Australian *Nephrolepis* by the entire margins of pinnae with linear sori.

Key to Australian *Nephrolepis* spp.:

- 1a. Sori linear with a linear indusium and borne on margin; pinnae with entire margins = *Nephrolepis acutifolia*
- 1b. Sori round or kidney-shaped with a kidney-shaped indusium and borne supramediately to medially, each on the end of a vein, margins ~ crenate = 2
- 2a. Pinnae with an obtuse apex, less than 50 mm long = 3
- 2b. Pinnae with an acute to attenuate apex, greater than 50 mm long = 4
- 3a. Rachis with scales, rarely hairy, basal auricles of pinnae overlapping rachis = *Nephrolepis cordifolia*
- 3b. Rachis with hairs, rarely scaly, basal auricles of pinnae not usually overlapping rachis = *Nephrolepis arida*
- 4a. Pinnae with an acroscopic basal auricle; all parts hirsute = 5
- 4b. Pinnae lacking a distinct acroscopic basal auricle, indumentum sparse = 5
- 5a. Hairs on upper side of costae absent; rachis scales rufous, with strongly dentate acumen; sori submarginal = *Nephrolepis hirsutula*
- 5b. Hairs on upper side of costa present; rachis scales hyaline or light brown (rarely rufous), with nearly entire acumen; sori submedial = *Nephrolepis brownii*
- 6a. Sori borne close to margin, stolons densely scaly = *Nephrolepis biserrata*
- 6b Sori borne medially, stolons green with few scales = *Nephrolepis oblitterata*

## Citation of Australian Tropical Ferns and Lycophytes

Field AR, Quinn CJ, Zich FA (2022) Australian Tropical Ferns and Lycophytes. [apps.lucidcentral.org/fern/text/intro/index.htm](https://apps.lucidcentral.org/fern/text/intro/index.htm) (accessed online INSERT DATE).

Field AR, Quinn CJ, Zich FA (2022) '*Platyserium superbum*', in Australian Tropical Ferns and Lycophytes. [apps.lucidcentral.org/fern/text/entities/platyserium\\_superbum.htm](https://apps.lucidcentral.org/fern/text/entities/platyserium_superbum.htm) (accessed online INSERT DATE).



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