

# *Nephrolepis cordifolia*

## Family:

Nephrolepidaceae

## Botanical name

*Nephrolepis cordifolia* (L.) C.Presl

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

<https://id.biodiversity.org.au/name/apni/82033>

## Common name:

Sword Fern or Fishbone Fern

## Description

Stolons often producing spherical tubers to 15 mm diam.; stolons, tubers and basal portions of stipes densely covered with linear-lanceolate brown scales with short basal processes and denticulate margins. Fronds to 1 m long (rarely longer); rachis bearing scales consisting of a round dark base giving rise to 1 longer and many shorter hair-like processes. Pinnae usually glabrous, with an enlarged rounded basal auricle overlapping the rachis. Sterile pinnae 12–35 mm long, 6–11 mm wide; margins crenulate towards the rounded apex. Fertile pinnae often shorter, with crenate margins. Sori submarginal, usually in very regular rows with open side of reniform indusium oriented towards pinna apex.

## Distribution

Occurs along the NE QLD coast and hinterland from Cooktown south to northern NSW and in WA and NT. Also widespread in the palaeotropics.

## Habit and habitat

Terrestrial, lithophytic and occasionally epiphytic in rainforest and rainforest margins in a wide variety of situations.

## Natural history

Both indigenous and naturalised populations of this species occur in QLD.

## Cultivation

Easily cultivated in the ground or in a hanging container in a tropical, subtropical or warm temperate garden or fernery.

## Similar species

*Nephrolepis cordifolia* can be distinguished from other Australian *Nephrolepis* by its shorter, stouter more numerous pinnae with a blunt apex combined with basal auricles that overlap the rachis. It sometimes has spherical tubers on the root system.

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

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Close up of frond showing sori.  
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Close up of frond showing upper (adaxial) surface. © G. Sankowsky



Habit. © G. Sankowsky



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