

# *Platycterium superbum*

## Family:

Polypodiaceae

## Botanical name

*Platycterium superbum* de Jonch. & Hennipman

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

<https://id.biodiversity.org.au/name/apni/116543>

## Description

Rhizome short-creeping, clothed with chaffy lanceolate scales. Rhizome embedded in a mass of fronds and roots. Roots not proliferous. Nest fronds rounded-reniform in lower part, 60 cm or more diam., appressed to substrate and densely clothed with fawn stellate hairs; upper part flabellate, irregularly divided into elongate dichotomous spreading lobes. Foliage fronds usually paired, pendulous, up to 5 times forked, 30–200 cm long; base broadly cuneate. Sporangia in a single patch c. 10–50 cm wide, bulging into the sinus of first fork of foliage frond on its lower surface. Spores 70–85 µm long, 42.5–57.5 µm wide.

## Distribution

Occurs in NE and E QLD Rainforests from the Windsor Tablelands to SE NSW.

## Habit and habitat

Epiphytic on large trees in mid- to upper-montane vine forest. Most commonly observed on the inland fringe of tableland rainforests.

## Natural history

The nest fronds of this species form a large basket that catches rain and falling debris and funnels it into the root system. The nest fronds remain green at maturity.

## Cultivation

Readily cultivated on a tree, rock, slab or in a pot of coarse material. Grows well in a garden or fernhouse in the tropics, subtropics and warm temperate areas. Plants should be kept on the dry side in cool weather.

## Similar species

Key to Australian *Platycterium* spp.:

- 1a. Nests with a solitary growing point, fertile fronds with a single large sorus in the first sinus, nest-fronds forming a wide-spreading fan of lobes = *Platycterium superbum*
- 1b Nests forming a colony with several growing points, fertile fronds with sori on the penultimate lobes and not in the sinuses, nest fronds not forming a wide spreading fan of lobes = 2.
- 2a. Nest fronds with an entire upper margin and not forming a basket = *Platycterium hillii*
- 2b. Nest fronds with a lobed upper margin and forming a basket = 3
- 3a. Plants with a dense covering of stellate hairs, foliage fronds white below obscuring venation, nest fronds drying to a mushroom pink or grey, upper lobes narrow and finger like = *Platycterium veitchii*
- 3b. Plants with sparse covering of stellate hairs, veins visible on lower surface of foliage fronds, nest fronds drying to a coppery brown, upper lobes not as above = *Platycterium bifurcatum*

## 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).

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Close up of frond showing sori.

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Close up of frond showing. © G.

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