Tuber ladder fern

Nephrolepis cordifolia

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Davalliaceae (ground fern)

Also known as
Sword fern, Boston fern, tuber sword fern

Where is it originally from?
Pantropic

What does it look like?
Terrestrial or epiphytic fern (<1 m tall) with small, erect, scaly rhizomes producing many long runners and round, 1-3 cm hairy potato-like tubers. Fronds (40-100 x 5-8 cm) are erect or arching when long, with serrated, divided leaflets.

Photo: Trevor James

Are there any similar species?
Rare native ladder fern (*Nephrolepis flexuosa*) is similar, but fronds only grow to 65 cm and it has no tubers. Indoor fern *N. exaltata* (also called Boston fern) is not known to be weedy and has wider, softer fronds and no tubers.

Why is it weedy?
Spreads by spores, runners and tubers, and forms dense, long-lived patches which are often large. Grows in the damp or dry, on the ground or in trees, in the open or the shade, in most soil types and in hot to moderately cool temperatures.

Photo: Trevor James

How does it spread?
Spore spread is probably minor, but runners and tubers are spread in dumped vegetation and soil, and occasionally water.

What damage does it do?
Crowds out groundcovers, shrubs and other ferns, and can contribute to streamside erosion.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Disturbed bush and shrubland, fernland, tussockland, coastal forest, streamsides, gumlands, Gardens, waste areas, tracks, rock outcrops, banks, and streamsides.

Photo: Trevor James

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - Dig or pull out small infestations. Dispose of tubers and runners at a refuse transfer station, burn or bury.
*Note: large areas of bare soil are ideal for weed to establish. To avoid this, plant or sow desirable species to cover the bare soil.
2. Foliar spray with knapsack - Apply metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg active ingredient at a rate of 0.5g/L.
OR Apply a mixture of metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg active ingredient at a rate of 0.1g/L + glyphosate 360g/kg at a rate of 10ml/L .
Tip - allow 3-4 months for herbicide to translocate to tubers before clearing or replanting
CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Runners and tubers resprout if not disposed of carefully.