

Tuber ladder fern

Nephrolepis cordifolia

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.

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.

How does it spread?

Spore spread is probably minor, but runners and tubers are spread in dumped vegetation and soil, and occasionally water. Gardens, waste areas, tracks, rock outcrops, banks, streamsides are all sources of new infestations.

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, and gumlands.

What can I do to get rid of it?

Easy to kill.

1. Pull out, Leave on site to rot down. Dispose of tubers and runners at a refuse transfer station, burn or bury.
2. Spray: metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (1g/10L). Leave sprayed sites 3-4 months to allow herbicide to translocate to tubers before clearing or replanting.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Runners and tubers resprout if not disposed of carefully.



www.weedbusters.org.nz



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



Photo: Trevor James



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