

Blechnaceae

Chain Fern Family

Mostly distributed in the south–temperate and tropical zones, 250 species in 10 genera belong here. NS has a single genus of coarse ferns. Rhizomes and stipes bear scales at least at the base. Blades may be reddish when young, and are also once or twice-pinnate. The veins remain separate on the sterile fronds and join to form the sori–bearing secondary veins, on the fertile fronds. Sori are elongated; indusia are present. Spores are kidney–shaped.

***Woodwardia* Smith**

Chain Ferns

Fourteen species of terrestrial ferns comprise the genus, with ours associated with the coastal plain. Fronds are deciduous with sori arranged in chainlike rows. Stipes tend to be brown-scaly.

Key to species

A. Fronds once pinnate, slightly serrate; fertile fronds with much narrower pinnae.

Woodwardia areolata

aa. Fronds twice-pinnate; sterile fronds resemble fertile fronds.

W. virginica

***Woodwardia areolata* (L.) Moore**

Dwarf Chain Fern; woodwardie aréolée



Photo by David Mazerolle

Pinnae are shallowly toothed. Fertile fronds have very narrow pinnae with the sori in two rows along the midrib. Veins unite to form areoles. Plants produce several sterile fronds. Superficially resembles *Onoclea*, a very common species. The alternative arrangement of sterile pinnae should separate it from *Onoclea*, whose sterile pinnae are opposite.



Photo by Alain Belliveau

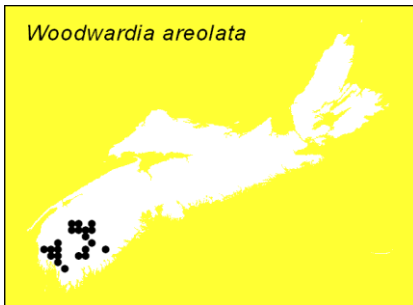
Slow-developing in spring; easiest to see and identify in August. Spores produced July to October.

Frequents swamps, bogs and above rivers and lakeshores.

Local in Shelburne and Yarmouth counties.

A coastal plain species it is found in NS; ME to TX. Rare inland to MI.

STATUS: YELLOW-listed.



***Woodwardia virginica* (L.) Sm.**

Virginia Chain Fern; woodwardie de Virginie



Photos by David Mazerolle

More robust than the previous species, its sterile fronds are twice-divided. Pinnules have minute teeth pointing distally. Sterile and fertile fronds are similar. Veins unite to form areoles. Resembles *Osmunda cinnamomea* but for the netted venation on the pinnules and its rhizomatous nature, rather than the cespitose nature of Cinnamon Fern. The blackened stipe and chainlike sori arrangement should serve to confirm it.



Photo by David Mazerolle

Spores July to September.

Lacustrine, in standing water, wooded swamps. Colonial and may form pure stands.

Common in southwestern NS, from Yarmouth to Halifax counties. Less so from Kings Co. east to Cape Breton.

NS to ON, south to TX and FL; Bermuda.