

Asplenium nidus Bird's Nest Fern¹

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Introduction

Eventually reaching about four feet tall and wide, Bird's nest fern is a striking plant to use as a specimen planting, at entranceways, or in containers where it will always attract attention (Fig. 1). The large, stemless, apple green leaves have a black, prominent midrib and unfurl from a tight center, giving a bird nest effect. The spores are borne in prominent brown sporophores on the underside of leaves.



Figure 1. Bird's nest fern

General Information

Scientific name: *Asplenium nidus*

Pronunciation: ass-PLEE-nee-um NYE-dus

Common name(s): bird's nest fern

Family: *Polypodiaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; perennial

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; foundation; border; ground cover; edging; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 2 to 4 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright; round

Plant density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

1. This document is FPS54, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed; undulate
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

slab. Plant on two to three-foot centers to create a mass planting.

There is a dwarf cultivar which grows to about two feet tall and wide. It is reportedly cold hardy into the lower part of USDA hardiness zone 8b.

Propagation is by spores or from tissue culture.

Pest and Diseases

Problems include foliar nematodes, scale, slugs, and snails.

No diseases are of major concern.

Flower

Flower color: no flowers
Flower characteristic: no flowers

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: no fruit
Fruit characteristic: no fruit

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Growing in rich, moist soil, bird's nest fern prefers shady locations. Leaves turn yellow and the plant stops growing in the sun. Like many ferns, drought tolerance is minimal. It can also be copper-wired to tree trunks to grow on a fibrous