

Netted Chainfern

Woodwardia areolata

Description

Netted Chainfern grows from 1½ to 2½ feet (5-8 dm) in height, and may form small colonies due to the presence of creeping underground stems. The leaves are easily distinguishable into vegetative and fertile types. The vegetative leaves have a typical fern-like appearance, being green, flattened, and divided into 7 to 12 very deep lobes (or distinct leaflets on the lower part of the leaf) that are not further subdivided into smaller lobes. The leaf veins are conspicuous and have a net-like or chain-like arrangement, as the common name implies. The fertile leaves of Netted Chainfern are dark colored, much narrower, not flattened and leaf-like, and have spore-producing structures on their underside. The vegetative leaf of this species resembles the leaf of the Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), a common species in Pennsylvania, but the lobes in Netted Chainfern tend to be alternately arranged along the leaf stalk while the lobes of Sensitive Fern tend to be oppositely arranged.



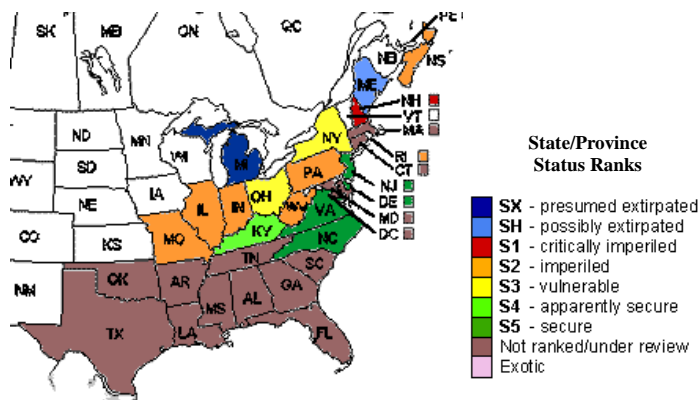
Photo source: Andrew Strassman (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat

Netted Chainfern has a distribution centered mainly on the Atlantic coastal plain from Nova Scotia south and west into Texas and Florida. In Pennsylvania, the species has been documented historically in scattered counties, particularly in the Delaware River drainage. It grows in swamps, seepages, wet woods, boggy wetlands and along the margins of streamlets.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2014

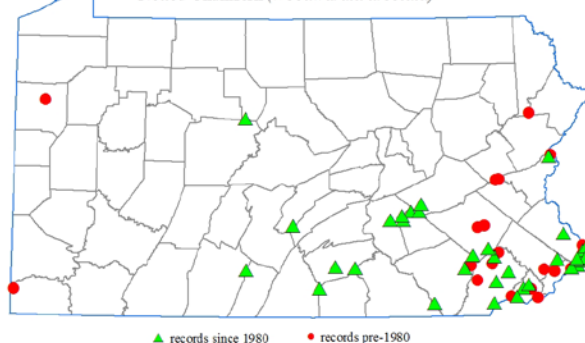


Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Netted Chainfern to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and the wetland habitat. It has no PA legal rarity status, but has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Threatened by PABS. About 30 populations are currently known from the state.

Pennsylvania Distribution

Netted Chainfern (*Woodwardia areolata*)



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program Data 3-2014

Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of netted chainfern and its habitat may be enhanced by establishing buffers around wetlands, controlling invasive species, and protecting the natural hydrology surrounding wetlands.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally Secure; **S2** – Imperiled in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2014.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

