



SEPTEMBER 2008

### ***Nephrolepis cordifolia*** **FISHBONE FERN**

Fishbone fern is one of the most common weeds in the Sutherland Shire, infesting a wide range of ecosystems.

#### **DESCRIPTION**

Fishbone fern has bright green fronds that are from 40-80 cm long and 10 cm at the widest point. The fronds grow in large clumps growing outwards from a central core within a short time. It produces no flowers. Its spores which are held on the under side of the fronds are spread by wind and water.

#### **EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

With its mat of fibrous roots and tubers the plant has the ability to take over the soil trapping water and nutrients reducing their availability to native plants. Many water sacks (or globular tubers) are attached to the dense rhizome network, and the root system spreads to effectively seal off the soil surface and further reduce the penetration of rainwater. Fishbone fern swiftly invades any disturbed or cleared sites of vegetation and can become a dominant ground cover, displacing many native plants.

#### **HABITAT**

Fishbone fern is a shade loving plant, and prefers a canopy environment. It takes advantage of any open or cleared soils in the understorey. Once established it has the ability to spread throughout its environment suppressing the native plants growing in the understorey. It thrives near urban areas and is commonly found in old gardens and along creek beds or drainage lines. Fishbone fern is spread through its spores being carried by wind or water and through dumping as garden waste.



Fishbone fern can form very dense clumps

## ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

A native of Australia. Its original habitat is in New South Wales but north of the Clarence River and into Queensland. It naturally grows in a wide variety of situations preferring moist shady areas, growing in soil or among rocks as well as growing as an epiphyte. It is a garden escapee and widely naturalised around Sydney.

## DECLARATION

Fishbone fern is considered an environmental weed in Sutherland Shire. However, it is still important that environmental weeds be destroyed, as they can also affect human health, or can be invasive in the natural environment killing the native flora and reducing the natural biodiversity. Native animals may also be affected due to the loss of their natural habitat.

## CONTROL

Responds to herbicide treatment but always needs a number of follow-up treatments. Herbicides should be used with care and according to the label conditions. Contact Council for further details. Hand remove by crowning each plant, ensuring the removal of all water sacks. Water sacks with the tiniest roots will regrow if left behind. Spraying is recommended where access is impossible, eg rock walls and cliff faces etc.



Fishbone fern is spread through its spores, found on the back of their leaf.

For further information contact  
Bushcare or Greenweb Units  
on 02 9710 0333  
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