

Lobed Spleenwort

Asplenium pinnatifidum

Description

Lobed spleenwort is a small fern that grows from a short rhizome. The leaves, narrowly triangular in shape and tapering to an elongated tip, may be up to 7 inches (17 cm) long but are often much shorter. The leaf margins have a lobed outline, with the lobes tending to get deeper near the base of the leaf. The leaf stem is mostly green, but maroon at the base. As in most ferns, the spores are produced on the underside of the leaves.

Distribution & Habitat

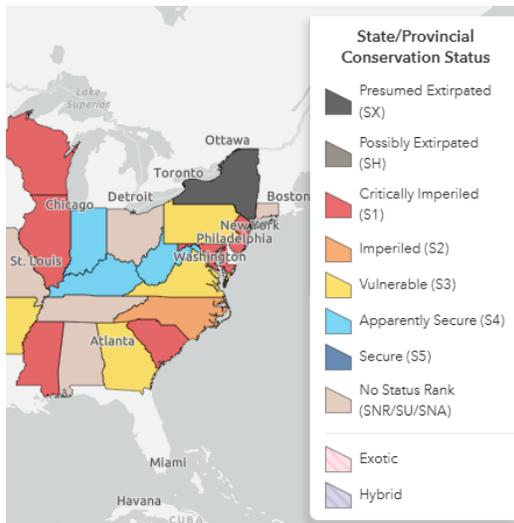
Lobed spleenwort has a range from New Jersey west into Wisconsin, and south into Georgia and Oklahoma. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically at scattered locations in the southern counties. It grows on dry shaded cliffs and rock outcrops, particularly on sandstone and schist.



Photo source: PNHP

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



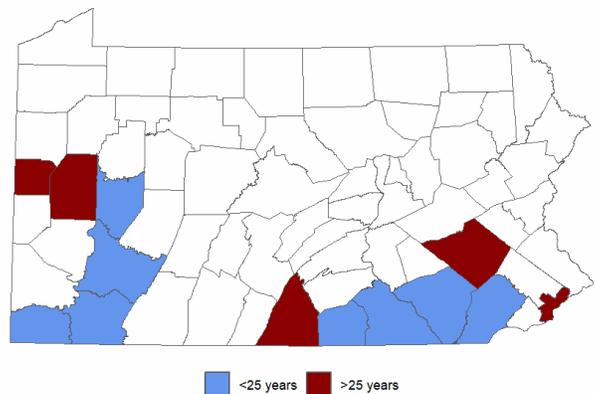
Conservation Considerations

This species and its habitat have threats such as indiscriminate spraying of herbicide, quarrying, invasive species, and forest fragmentation. The viability of existing populations and the rock outcrop habitat may be enhanced by establishing a surrounding buffer of forest.

Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers lobed spleenwort to be a species of special concern, based on the few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and its specialized habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a suggested rarity status of Rare. About two dozen populations, mostly with few individuals, are currently known.

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NatureServe conservation status ranks

G4 – Apparently secure globally; **S3** – Vulnerable in Pennsylvania.

References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

