

PTERIDOPHYTA

A NEW FERN RECORD FOR THE *FLORA OF SOUTHERN AFRICA* REGION

Asplenium unilaterale (Figure 9) is a widespread fern of the Old World tropics; on continental Africa it is fairly common in West Africa, becoming less frequent south of the equator. In the *Flora zambesiaca* region it is confined to three known localities: in Malawi from the Misuku Hills and Thyolo Mtn, and in Zimbabwe from a single locality in Chirinda Forest. Its recently discovered occurrence in the northern mountains of Swaziland therefore represents an intriguing southward extension of its distribution. It is also interesting to note that the valley in which this fern occurs is also occupied by an isolated population of the tree *Trilepisium madagascariensis* DC. (Moraceae) (Burrows & Burrows in press), a

species with which it is always associated where it is found in Zimbabwe and Malawi, suggesting that these two taxa are possibly the last surviving remnants of a relict vegetation type which persists in this hidden valley.

The plants were found growing on the wet margins of a rivulet flowing over rocks, in deep shade of evergreen forest. Although only one small population was seen, it is probable that other groups occur on the several other suitable sites in this valley. Since the locality is only ± 1 km from the South African border, it is also possible that *A. unilaterale* occurs on the South African side. This ribbon of forest is severely threatened by several species of invading

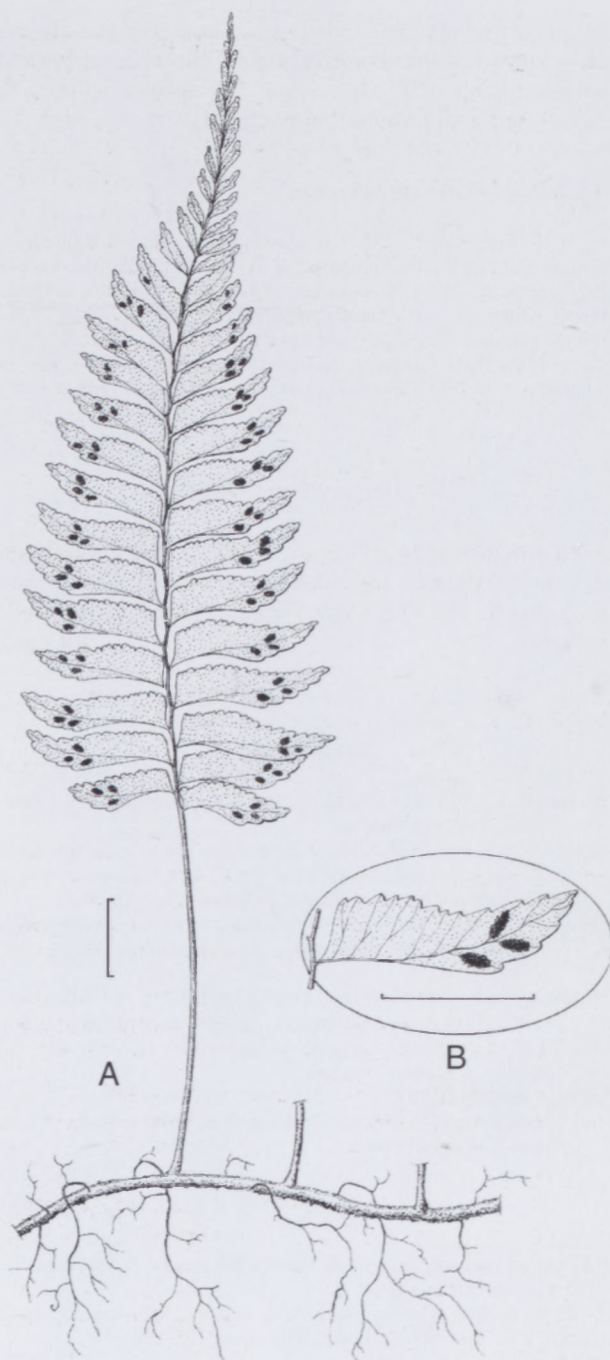


FIGURE 9.—*Asplenium unilaterale*, J.E. & S.M. Burrows 7693, A, frond and rhizome; B, median pinnule. Scale bars: 15 mm. Artist: S.M. Burrows.

alien plants, particularly *Chromolaena odorata* (Asteraceae) and *Solanum mauritianum* (Solanaceae). Somewhat

lesser threats at present include the uncontrolled harvesting of medicinal plants, and the clearing of the forest for the cultivation of *Cannabis sativa* (Cannabaceae).

***Asplenium unilaterale* Lam.**, Encyclopédie méthodique. Botanique 2,1: 305 (1786); Sim: 152 (1915); Tardieu-Blot: 182, t. 37 (1953); Tardieu-Blot: 189 (1958); Alston: 56 (1959); Tardieu-Blot: 195, t. 29 (1964); Schelpe: 174 (1970); W.B.G.Jacobsen: 340, t. 250 (1983); J.E.Burrows: 222, t. 50 (1990); J.E.Burrows & S.M.Burrows: 92 (1993). Type: Mauritius, Commerson s.n. (P-LA).

Asplenium resectum Sm.: t. 72 (1791). Type: Réunion, Commerson (Thouin) s.n. (P).

SWAZILAND.—2531 (Komatiport): Ntfontjeni Dist., Wyldsdale Farm, Ugutugulu River, 25° 48.36'S, 31° 17.01'E, 600 m, (—CD), 11 May 2002, J.E. & S.M. Burrows 7693 (K, LYD, NBG, NU, PRE, SDNH, Buffelskloof Herb.).

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