

Asparagus Fern

Asparagus densiflorus syn. *A. sprengeri* (Kunth) Liliaceae



Biology



- Member of the lily family
- Native to south Africa
- Not a true fern, but resembles
- Slightly woody evergreen plant

Background

Economic Uses

- Cultivated nationally as an ornamental
- Groundcover and container plantings

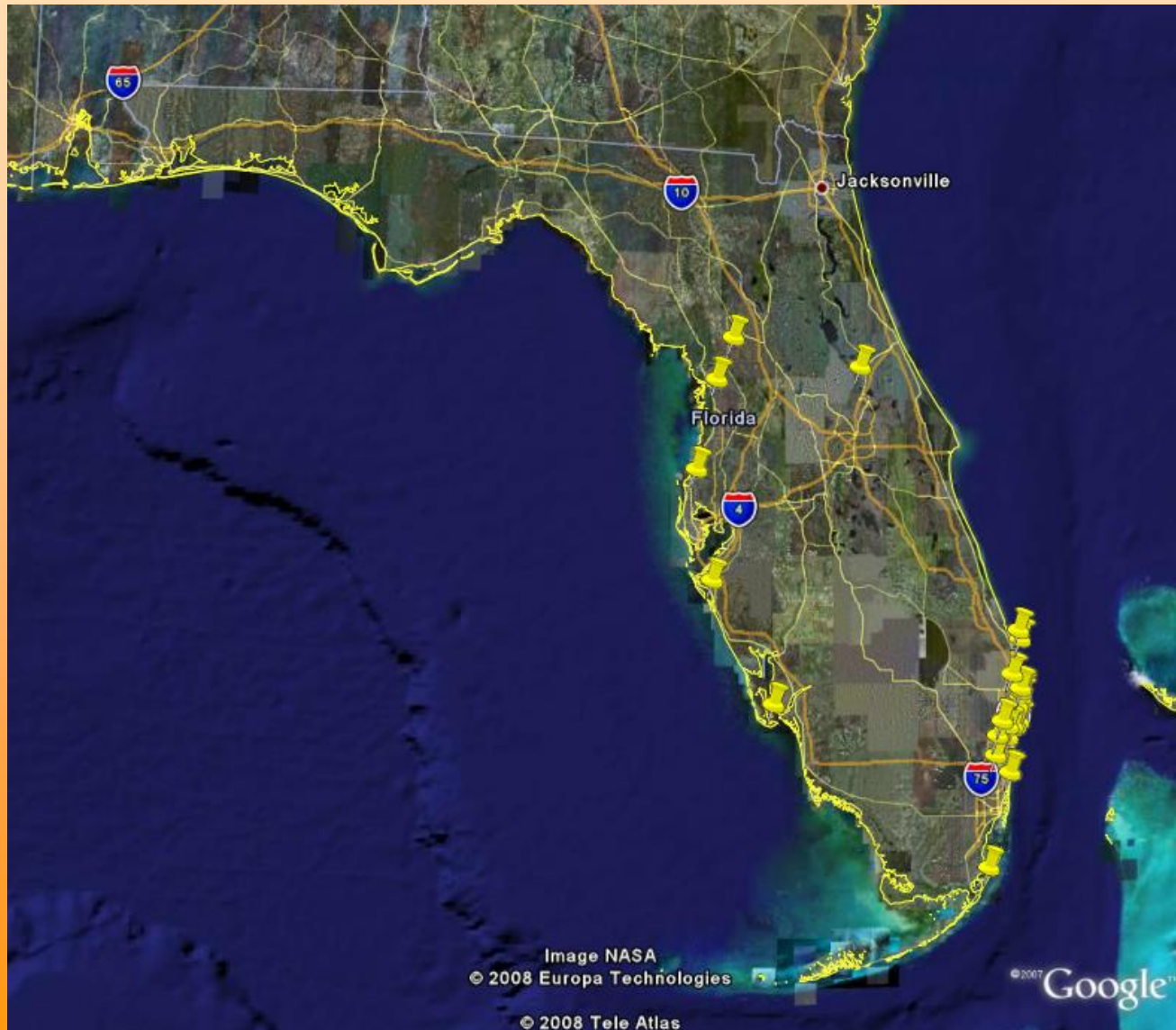


Distribution



- Found throughout many natural areas of Florida
- Commonly found along roadways and disturbed areas, forest edges
 - Generally as a direct escape from cultivation
- Extensively in Hillsborough, Lee, Palm Beach and Broward counties

Asparagus Fern Distribution in Florida



Impacts



- Category II invasive species (FLEPPC)
 - Limited spread into undisturbed sites
- Forms colonies easily, displaces native vegetation
- Smothers understory species, prevents regeneration of canopy species

Identification

Mature Plant

- Grows up to 2 feet in height and 6 feet in length
- Sprawling, smothering growth habit
- Fern-like appearance



Leaves & Stems

- Tiny spines along branches
- Needle-like branchlets clustered in nodes



Flowers

- Flowers are white or pale pink
- Fragrant and very small
- Very short flowering period in summer



Fruit

- Bright red berry
- Contains 3 seeds per fruit
- Birds readily eat, disperse seed through droppings



Management

Preventative

Cultural

Mechanical

Biological

Chemical

Preventative



1. Limit planting as an ornamental
2. Remove existing plants, including resprouts and before seeds are produced
3. Avoid mechanical disturbance in forested areas – logging, rouging, etc. where asparagus fern is present

Cultural



1. Alternative landscape plants to replace asparagus fern
2. Programs to educate homeowners about the problems associated with this plant and proper identification
3. Maintain good ground cover and mixture of plant species to reduce establishment

Biological



1. There are no known biological control agents available for asparagus fern management in Florida or the southeastern U.S.

Mechanical



1. Hand pull young seedlings, including all roots, repeated pulling for resprouts
2. Mowing or cutting is effective, but must be repeated to control resprouts

Chemical



1. Over-the-top applications of glyphosate at 1% solution plus 0.25% surfactant
2. Thoroughly wet leaves with herbicide
3. Retreatment will likely be necessary for complete eradication
4. Limited testing with other herbicides



Useful Links

- Floridata Homepage:
http://www.floridata.com/main_fr.cfm?state=Welcome&viewsrc=welcome.htm
- University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants:
<http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/welcome.html>
- The Plant Conservation Alliance's Alien Plant Working Group. Weeds Gone Wild: Alien Plant Invaders of Natural Areas:
<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/index.htm>

Literature Cited

Langeland, K.A. and K. Craddock Burks. 1998. Identification and Biology of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. IFAS Publication SP 257. University of Florida, Gainesville. 165 pp