A revised taxonomic account of the fern genus
Woodwardia (Blechnaceae) in Thailand

THAWEESAKDI BOONKERD* & ROSSARIN POLLAWATN*

ABSTRACT. The genus Woodwardia Sm. is revised and is now represented in Thailand by two species, W. harlandii and W. japonica. These are described and illustrated. A key to the species is presented.

INTRODUCTION

The genus Woodwardia Sm. belongs to Blechnaceae subfam. Blechnoideae. So far 14 species have been recognised. These are predominantly distributed in the northern hemisphere, especially in eastern Asia (Kramer et al., 1990). Holttum (1960) in his Ferns of Malaya recorded only one species from tropical Southeast Asia, namely W. auriculata Blume from the Cameron Highlands, Malaysia. He also noted that this species is closely allied to W. japonica (L. f.) Sm. Devol (1980) recorded five species, namely W. harlandii Hook., W. kempii Copel., W. japonica, W. orientalis Sw., and W. unigemmata (Makino) Nakai from Taiwan. Hô (1991) noted four species from Vietnam, viz. W. cochinchinensis Ching, W. harlandii, W. japonica and W. unigemmata.

In mainland Asia, Chiu (1974) regarded W. cochinchinensis Ching as a separate species. However, he also noted that this species is similar to W. auriculata, W. magnifica Ching & P. S. Chiu and W. japonica. In his key the major difference between W. cochinchinensis and W. japonica is the number of pairs of pinnae (japonica: 10–15 pairs, cochinchinensis: 20–30 pairs). Raymond Cranfill (pers. comm.) treated W. cochinchinensis and W. magnifica as synonyms of W. japonica. He commented that “W. japonica is the most highly variable species of the genus, the variation is nevertheless not purely random. There are tendencies toward an increase in size, an elaboration of pinna segments and an increase in the number of such segments per pinna as one approaches the southern and eastern distributional limits of the species”. W. japonica and W. auriculata are morphologically similar, but can be distinguished by the combination of (1) the number of pairs of pinnae per frond (W. japonica: 9–21 pairs, W. auriculata: 17–23 pairs) and (2) the number of pairs of lobes per pinna (W. japonica: 10–23 (25) pairs, W. auriculata: 25–30 pairs).

*Department of Botany, Faculty of Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10330, Thailand.
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In Thailand, Tagawa & Iwatsuki (1988) recorded only one species, *W. cochinchinensis* Ching. They noted that Ching (1931) used large oblong turgid sori, the membranous brown indusia and the larger size of plants (see Tagawa & Iwatsuki, 1988) as diagnostic characters to distinguish *W. cochinchinensis* from *W. japonica*. Moreover, they added that only the indusia and size of Thai plants agreed with the characteristics of *W. cochinchinensis*.

Thai material and material under *W. cochinchinensis* from existing herbarium specimens deposited at BCU, BM, BK, BKF, K, L, and P were re-examined. It was found that all Thai specimens have lateral pinnae in 7–20 pairs, with 12 pairs being the most common. From the information above it can be seen that Thai specimens have numbers of lateral pinnae which match the diagnostic characters of *W. japonica* (L. f.) Sm. as was pointed out by Chiu (1974) and R. Cranfill (unpublished data). Therefore all Thai specimens of *W. cochinchinensis* are re-determined here as *W. japonica*.

Some time ago during a field trip to Phu Luang, a newly recorded species, *W. harlandii* Hook. was found in hill evergreen forest. Its occurrence in north-eastern Thailand is in agreement with its previously known geographical distribution in Vietnam, Taiwan, South China and South Japan.

**KEY TO THE SPECIES**

1. Rhizome creeping, stipe distant; frond dimorphic, fertile fronds with 3–5 pairs of lateral pinnae, pinnae shallowly lobed. Sori linear-oblong, along costa and costular areoles

1. *W. harlandii*

1. Rhizome stout, erect, stipe tufted; frond monomorphic, with 7–20 pairs of lateral pinnae, pinnae deeply lobed. Sori oblong, discrete, along costular areoles

2. *W. japonica*


Rhizome creeping, covered with small scales; scales broadly lanceolate, entire; stipes distant in mature plants, covered with small narrowly lanceolate scales at base. Frond dimorphic. Stipe brown-black at base, stramineous in upper portion, scaly at base, grooved; sterile stipe 12–24 cm long, fertile stipe up to 45 cm. *Sterile lamina* up to 24 cm long, simple, lanceolate, or tri-palmately lobed, terminal lobe the longest, base rounded, margin serrate near apex and shallowly lobed below, coriaceous, light green to light brown when dry. *Fertile lamina* up to 40 cm long, simply pinnate, with an elongated terminal pinna, lateral pinnae 3–5 pairs similar to the terminal one, pinnae sessile, forming a winged rachis with the opposite lateral pair, oblong, 2.5–3 by 20–25 cm; veins anastomosing. Sori linear, along costal and costular areoles; indusia linear, narrow, thin, opening towards costa or costule.

Thailand.— NORTH-EASTERN: Loei [Phu Luang, T. Boonkerd 579 (BCU!), 730 (BCU!) & 1644 (BCU!)].

Distribution.— South Japan, South China, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Ecology.— Terrestrial, on dry hill slope in hill evergreen forest, semi-shade at 1,200 m altitude.
Figure 1. *Woodwardia harlandii* Hook.: habit and fertile pinnae. From T. Boonkerd 579.

*Rhizome* short, erect, covered with large red-brown scales at bases. *Stipe* 25–50 cm long, scaly at base; scale large, reddish-brown, lanceolate, entire. *Frond* large, monomorphic, 1-pinnate-pinnatifid; lamina oblong-lanceolate, 50–90 by 28–40 cm, truncate to rounded at base, acute to acuminate at apex; pinnae oblong-lanceolate, sessile, base truncate, lateral pinnae 7–20 pairs, lobed about ¼ way to costa, segments on either side of costa of equal length; median pinnae 14–20 by 2–6 cm. *Sori* oblong, in 2 rows along costules, 2–4 mm long, sunken; indusia discrete, membranous, brown, opening towards costa and costules.

Figure 2. *Woodwardia harlandii* Hook.: A. habit; B. part of fertile pinnae; *Woodwardia japonica* (L.f.) Sm.: C. habit; D. part of fertile pinnae. Photographed by S. Suddee and S. Samransuk, Phu Luang, Loei.

Distribution.— Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Ecology.— Terrestrial, on dry hill slopes in hill evergreen forest, in semi-shade at 900–1,550 m altitude.

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REFERENCES


