

Pellaea mucronata (D. C. Eaton) D. C. Eaton var. ***mucronata***, BIRD'S FOOT FERN.

Perennial herb, evergreen, rhizomatous, fibrous-rooted, rosetted, canopy open or dense with erect, ascending, and spreading leaves, 20–40(–60) cm tall; shoots with short stems and glabrous leaves, glaucous; fiddleheads not coiled but only having a sharp hook below tiny juvenile blade, the juvenile blade conspicuously fine-pubescent with hairs several mm long and petiole axis without scales and hairs; rhizomes vertical, for each rosette often bulblike and thick connected with horizontal and creeping segments < 10 mm diameter, densely covered with overlapping, appressed scales, the scales linear, 5–8 × 0.1 mm, at maturity dark golden brown, 1-veined, with unbranched long hairs among scales; in ×-section whitish. **Leaves (fronds):** helically alternate, odd-2(3–4)-pinnately compound with primary and secondary leaflets often opposite and tightly clustered along axis, never flat, long-petiolate, without stipules; petiole (stipe) cylindric, > blade, dark brown; primary leaflets mostly 20–70 mm long, bearing secondary leaflets with 2 or 3(–5) segments or occasionally single segments; axes slender, red-brown and dark brown, with 2 conspicuous ridges on upper side, brittle; petiolules of primary and secondary leaflets short; axis of secondary leaflets to 2.5 mm long; ultimate segments ± sessile and ⊥ axis, elliptic or oblong to lanceolate, 2–6 × 0.5–2 mm, tightly inrolled (revolute) on margins from base to just below tip and often caterpillarlike, forming a false indusium, viewed from above base appearing broadly tapered, the fringe white and frilled where touching lower surface, lower surface visible along midrib, with a distinct, sharp point at tip (mucronate), the mucron 0.2–0.3 mm long and often reddish, surfaces bluish green to purplish when fully glaucous. **Sori:** absent, false indusium from base to just below tip, with sporangia submarginal on lower surface (set in from white fringe). **Sporangia:** 64-spored. Sporulation winter–spring.

Native. Perennial herb occasionally founded in undisturbed scrubland away from the immediate coast often at the bases of shrubs or rocks, in shallow soil. *Pellaea mucronata* has much smaller blade segments than on *P. andromedifolia*, but not always, so the critical feature to observe is presence of a sharp point (mucron) at the tip, hence the scientific name *mucronata*. Additionally, the principal axes have two ridges on the upper side, whereas in the other species the axes are strictly cylindric.

B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson