1. Asplenium L. (spleenwort)

Plants perennial, homosporous. Rhizomes erect to short-creeping, compact,scaly, the scales clathrate (the endwalls colored, the centers transparent ornearly so). Leaves clustered, variously compound (simple or lobed elsewhere).Sporangia aggregated into sori on the undersurface of the leaf blades,extending along the veins, the indusium membranous, attached along 1 side.Spores 32 or 64 per sporangium, monolete, 25–60 mm long, black. Gametophytes green, flat,heart-shaped to kidney-shaped, often with stalked glands. About 700 species,worldwide.

Most of the Missourispecies of this genus belong to a group known as the “Appalachian AspleniumComplex,” which is among the most intensively studied groups of ferns in theworld. The genus is famous for its high levels of interspecific hybridization,with sterile, primary hybrids recovering fertility through a process ofchromosomal doubling. Although relatively few of the primary hybrids have beenreported from Missouri,they should be looked for in the field in areas where two or more species growtogether. Hybrid spleenworts can usually be recognized by their unusual,irregular leaf division pattern, with adjacent pinnae or lobes unequal in size.