**Woodwardia fimbriata** Sm.
giant chain fern
Blechnaceae - chain fern family
status: State Sensitive, BLM strategic, USFS strategic
rank: G5 / S2

**General Description:** Large, evergreen fern; stem forms a stout caudex covered by leaf bases, close to ground level. Leaves several, all similar, basal, clustered, 40-170 cm long. Petiole straw-colored, with orangish to reddish scales at the base. Blade pinnate-pinnatifid, pale green, elliptic-lanceolate, initially scaly-glandular but becoming smooth. Pinnae in 8-24 pairs, narrowly triangular to lanceolate, not jointed to the midrib. Veins netted, forming a single row of enclosed chambers along each side of the midrib, then free to margins.

**Reproductive Characteristics:** Sori mostly confined to enclosed chambers, forming a row along each side of the midrib, elongate, deeply sunken into blades. Identifiable year-round.

**Identification Tips:** This fern is one of the largest in WA and the only species of Woodwardia in the Pacific Northwest. Its sori are distinct, elongate, somewhat curved, chainlike along the midrib, and deeply sunken in the chambers enclosed by netted veins.

**Range:** B.C., WA, OR, CA, NV, AZ, and northern Baja California, Mexico.

**Habitat/Ecology:** Stream banks, shaded wet road banks, edges of bogs, and moist bluffs; among conifer and mixed conifer-hardwood forests, and usually near salt water. It can occur along moist bluffs that are somewhat prone to slope failure. Typical elevations in WA: 1-30 m (3-100 ft). There is one documented occurrence about 5 miles inland from salt water, at about 275 m (900 ft) elevation. Associated species include red alder (*Alnus rubra*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), and maidenhair fern (*Adiantum aleuticum*).

**Comments:** This species has a limited distribution in WA; there are few known occurrences, and most have a small number of individuals. Threats include competition from invasive species, erosion, and collection. It is also rare in B.C.


Adapted from *Field Guide to the Rare Plants of Washington*
http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/CAMFIE.html