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LEAF TRAITS OF *Dicranopteris flexuosa* (Schrad.) Underw. (Gleicheniaceae) FROM SHADE AND SUN ENVIRONMENTS

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Invasive species such as *Dicranopteris flexuosa* (Schrad.) Underw. (Gleicheniaceae) may perform excessive population growth which is related to higher leaf area and photosynthetic capacity. This species occurs at different environments showing variations on population size. The objective of this work was to evaluate the leaf area of *D. flexuosa* from natural environments showing different light conditions. Leaves were sampled from populations growing at the Quedas do Rio Bonito Ecological Park, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Plants were sampled from plants under two different environments: the “Campo Rupestre” with open vegetation where plants grown exposed to full sun and the Atlantic Forest where plants grown under shading condition. One leaf per plant was collected and 20 plants per environment were evaluated. Images from leaves were obtained at Epson V370 Scanner and the images were used to evaluate the leaf area using the ImageJ software. Leaves were oven-dried and the fresh mass evaluated at analytic scale. The specific leaf area was calculated (SLA). The data were submitted to one-way ANOVA and Tukey test to $p < 0.05$. The leaf area was twice the size on plants from shade environment as compared to full sun. The leaf dry mass showed no significant modification. In addition, the SLA was higher on shade leaves as compared to sun leaves. Shade leaves are usually higher in area and are thinner as compared to sun leaves to improve the light limitation on the environment. Therefore, *D. flexuosa* shows leaf plasticity in response to light condition and from shade environments promote the development of higher leaf area and SLA enhancing light harvesting efficiency.