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Identification of Vine Weeds in Florida Citrus[1]

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Vines are classified as broadleaf plants. As with other plants, they are classified as either annuals, biennials, or perennials. A combination of leaf, stem, fruit, and/or seed characteristics will aid in the identification process. Useful guide characteristics to identify broadleaf plants are included at the end of this article.

Most vine species are easier to control with herbicides when in the seedling stage. Once vines reach into the tree canopy they blend into the host foliage and an insufficient amount of post emergence herbicide contacts the plant to provide adequate vine control. When control strategies are implemented, vines inhabiting nearby ditches, fields or other locations can provide seed sources for future infestations and should be addressed in your control program. Preventing vines from becoming widely distributed and concentrating efforts when they are present in isolated areas can aid in their control. Vines will compete with a tree for light and can shade the entire canopy if left uncontrolled. By controlling vines, tree vigor is maintained, yields are often higher, and harvesting operations are improved.

Balsam-Apple Vine -- *Momordica charantia* (Fig. 1)

Figure 1. Balsam-apple vine

Leaves:

alternate, petioles 3 to 6 cm long. Leaf blades are smooth to hairy, deeply palmate, 5 to 7-lobed, and up to 12 cm wide. Leaf blade lobes are rounded to pointed with toothed margins.

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Stems:

slender, with twisting threadlike tendrils.

Flowers:

yellow, funnel-shaped, usually borne singly on a stalk. Flower petals are rounded or indented at the tip and up to 1 cm long.

Fruit:

egg-shaped, up to 10 cm long, golden yellow to bright orange at maturity and covered with bumps.

Seeds:

bright red pulp encloses the seeds; seeds are elliptic, flat, and 9 to12 mm long.

Life cycle:

annual or perennial.

Maypop or Passion-Flower -- *Passiflora incarnara* (Fig. 2)

Figure 2. Maypop or Passion-flower

Leaves:

alternate, deeply palmate, 3 to 4-lobed, and 5 to 15 cm long. Conspicuous glands are on the upper end of the petioles.

Flowers:

solitary on stalks in leaf axils, 5 to 10 cm long. The sepals are green or light lavender to white.

Fruit:

fleshy, green, egg-shaped, turns yellowish green with age. The fruit is hollow and pops open with pressure revealing dark brown 4 to 10 mm long seeds.

Stem:

smooth or has small hairs.

Growth pattern:

erect, creeping to climbing and sparsely branched, produces long under ground runners and many shoots.

Life cycle:

perennial, herbaceous vine, often erect when young.

Cypress-Vine Morning-Glory -- *Ipomoea quamoclit* (Fig. 3)

Figure 3. Cypress-vine morning-glory

Leaves:

ovate, deeply divided, almost frilly and feather-like, into many linear segments or lobes, the blade is 7.5 cm long and 4.5 cm wide.

Flowers:

trumpet-shaped with joined crimson to red petals, 4 to 7 cm long, borne on stalks containing 1 to 2 flowers.

Fruit:

round-ovoid capsule, 5 to 8 mm long, and usually contains four seeds.

Stem:

slender, twining, and hairless.

Growth pattern:

climbing vine.

Life cycle:

annual.

Scarlet Morning-Glory -- *Ipomoea hederifolia* (Fig. 4)

Figure 4. Scarlet morning-glory

Leaves:

generally ovate with 3 deep lobes, tips pointed, base heart-shaped.

Flowers:

trumpet-shaped, with joined scarlet to yellowish to orange-red petals, 2.5 to 4.5 cm long, borne individually or with several flowers on long stalks.

Fruit:

contains 1 to 4 seeds, capsule round, up to 8 mm in diameter.

Stem:

twining.

Growth pattern:

climbing.

Life cycle:

annual.

Air-Potato -- *Dioscorea bulbifera* (Fig. 5)

Leaves:

alternate, blades up to 20 cm long and 25 cm wide or larger and broadly heart-shaped, long-stalked.

Figure 5. Air-potato

Flowers:

flowers rare.

Fruit/aerial tubers:

aerial tubers are formed in leaf axils, tough, smooth and leathery, ranging from 1 to 10 cm in diameter.

Stem:

up to 60 feet, smooth, freely branching, twining.

Growth pattern:

aggressive, high-climbing vine.

Life cycle:

perennial, foliage subject to freezing.

Citron or Citron Melon -- *Citrullus colocynthis var. lanatus [Citrullus lanatus var. lanatus]* (Fig. 6)

Figure 6. Citron or citron melon

Leaves:

rounded, deeply divided, with 3 to 4 pairs of lobes, margins toothed, and surfaces rough, on long stalks.

Flowers:

solitary, with broad, yellow, 2 to 10 mm long petals.

Fruit:

light green or variegated with light and dark green color. The fruit is a globose to oblong berry, 15 to 50 cm long, containing many greenish seeds with a pitted surface.

Stem:

hairy, tendrils at joints.

Growth pattern:

climbing or sprawling.

Life cycle:

annual.

Cat's-Claw Vine -- *Macfadyena unguis-cati [Doxantha unguis-cati]* (Figs. 7 & 8)

Figure 7. Cat's-claw vine flower

Leaves:

opposite, compound, with 2 leaflets and a 3-parted forked tendril which is stiffly hooked and clawlike.

Figure 8. Cat's-claw vine

Stem:

woody, can be up to 6 cm in diameter.

Flowers:

yellow, 5 to 8 cm long, funnel-shaped, single or in small clusters.

Fruit:

flat, bean-like, up to 20 inches long, contains oblong, winged seeds.

Growth pattern:

woody, climbing by hooked tendrils, evergreen.

Life cycle:

perennial.

Milkweed or Strangler Vine -- *Morrenia odorata* (Figs. 9 & 10)

Figure 9. Milkweed vine seedpod

Leaves:

opposite, ranging from arrowhead- to heart-shaped, long-stalked.

Figure 10. Milkweed or strangler vine

Flowers:

inconspicuous, greenish-yellow and borne in leaf axils.

Fruit:

dark green, woody, turns brown with maturity, rough-textured, 8 to 10 cm in diameter; contains seeds which are tufted with silky white hairs at one end.

Stem:

stem produces a milky sap when broken.

Growth pattern:

twining, climbing vine.

Life cycle:

perennial.

Virginia Creeper -- *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Fig. 11)

Figure 11. Virginia creeper

Leaves:

alternate, long-stalked, palmately compound, 3 to 7 leaflets; leaflets thin, oval, and coarsely toothed above the middle.

Flowers:

very small, yellowish-green with spreading petals, in large bunches at branch tips.

Fruit:

inedible, 8 to 9 mm long, deep blue to black and contains a 4 to 5 mm long seed.

Stem:

with frequent nodes and infrequently branched, branched tendrils with adhesive discs at each node.

Growth pattern:

woody, climbing vine, or ground cover.

Life cycle:

perennial.

Puncture Vine -- *Tribulus cistoides* (Fig. 12)

Figure 12. Puncture vine

Leaves:

opposite, evenly pinnately compound, 4 to 6 cm long, short-stalked, 5 to 10 pairs of leaflets.

Flowers:

light yellow, 4 to 5 cm across, borne on 2.5 to 5 cm stalks, single in leaf axils.

Fruit:

spiny, separating into 3 segments, hairy.

Stem:

reddish in color, hairy.

Growth pattern:

prostate, branching.

Life cycle:

summer annual.

Skunk Vine -- *Paederia foetida* (Fig. 13)

Figure 13. Skunk vine

Leaves:

opposite, blades oval to linear-lanceolate, 2 to 11 cm long, long-stalked.

Flowers:

small, grayish pink or lilac, in opposite-branched clusters at stem tips.

Fruit:

shiny, coppery to purplish-green, with 1 black roundish seed.

Stem:

high-climbing, smooth woody.

Growth pattern:

twining vine from a woody rootstock, with long underground runners.

Life cycle:

perennial.

Comment:

leaves and stems have a disagreeable odor especially when crushed.

Possum Grape Vine -- *Cissus verticillata* (Figs. 14 & 15)

Figure 14. Possum grape vine

Figure 15. Possum grape vine

Leaves:

alternate, blades broadly elliptic, 5 to 15 cm long, stalks to 6 cm long, margins with teeth.

Flowers:

green or yellowish-green, in stalked clusters opposite the leaves.

Fruit:

rounded, green with dark green specks, turning bluish-black at maturity, 6 to 9 mm long, 1-seeded.

Stem:

woody, flexible, tendrils occur opposite the leaves. Nodes will produce aerial roots when stems cut.

Growth pattern:

high climbing, can sustain itself in canopies with no ground contact.

Life cycle:

perennial.

Broadleaf Plant Leaf Characteristics

Useful characteristics to identify broadleaf weeds include the leaf type, leaf margin, leaf shape, leaf attachment and leaf arrangement (Fig. 16).

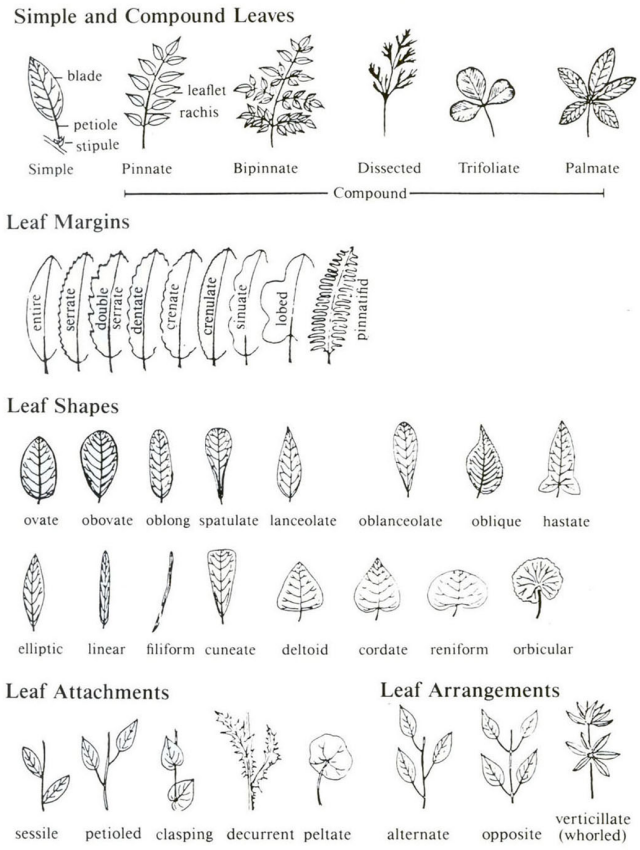

Figure 16. Broadleaf plant leaf characteristics Credits: Sketch source: Murphy, T.R., et al. 2000. Weeds of Southern Turfgrasses. Univ. of Fla., Coop. Ext. Serv., IFAS. Gainesville.