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Citrus Weed Spotlight

Pepper vine

Ampelopsis arborea (Nekemias arborea)

By Stephen H. Futch, David W. Hall and Brent Sellers

LIFE CYCLE: Perennial, climbing vine

HEIGHT: Twining, climbing to 20 feet or higher

LEAVES: Coarsely few-toothed, egg-shaped, alternate, stalked, twice pinnately divided; tendrils at leaf axis; young leaves reddish in color, turning dark green at maturity

STEM: Woody and smooth, climbing or semi-erect if no support

FLOWERS: In clusters opposite from the leaves on branchlets of the current year; greenish-white petals; most flowers bisexual (some unisexual)

FRUIT: Berries are green at first, turning purplish to black with maturity; not edible

SEEDS: Pear-shaped, two to five per berry, about three-sixteenth- to one-quarter-inch long

PROPAGATED BY: Seeds; localized spread from creeping root system, often spread by grading and plowing

COMMENTS: Found along wooded areas, fencerows and field edges; prefers wetter soils; native to North America, from Maryland and Ohio west into Missouri, Oklahoma and New Mexico, south through the southeastern states into Texas and Florida; Mexico and the West Indies. Suspected to cause skin irritation in some from repeated handling. Cultivated as an ornamental and screen, but often becomes very weedy.

CONTROL: Standard pre-emergence herbicides including diuron, indaziflam (Alion), norflurazon (Solicam) and simazine should provide suppression of emerging seedlings. Postemergence control with glyphosate is enhanced when applied in combination with 2,4-D, carfentrazone (Aim) or saflufenacil (Treevix), if adequate coverage is achieved and plants are small. However, once pepper vine gets entwined into the tree canopy, these herbicides offer little control. 🍊



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