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.

Stephen H. Futch is a University of Florida multi-county Extension agent at the Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred; David W. Hall is a retired botanist with the University of Florida departments of botany and natural sciences in Gainesville; Brent Sellers is a University of Florida associate professor at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center in Ona.