



Milkweed or strangler vine (*Morrenia odorata*)

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

LIFE CYCLE: Perennial vine

HEIGHT: Twining, climbing up to 20 feet or longer

LEAVES: Opposite, long-stalked, ranging from an arrowhead with basal lobes to heart-shaped; both surfaces hairy, gray-green, can be nearly 5 inches

STEM: Generally smooth; exudes a milky, extremely sticky, white sap when broken

FLOWERS: Inconspicuous, greenish yellow, borne in clusters from leaf axils; five narrow petals; strong odor of vanilla

FRUIT: Dark green, woody, turns brown with maturity; rough-textured, 5 to 6 inches long and 3 to 4 inches in diameter, deeply grooved on one side; fruit contains hundreds of seeds

SEEDS: Linear, black, about one-quarter-inch long; tufted with long, silky white hairs at tip; wind dispersed

PROPAGATED BY: Seeds

COMMENTS: Strangler vine was, like so many of our pests, brought into Florida as an ornamental plant from its native South America and discovered in citrus in the 1950s. Development in former citrus groves has allowed the vine to flourish in the subsequent landscapes. From these landscapes, visitors intrigued by the large fruits have moved the vines elsewhere,

including into the north peninsula and Panhandle. Internet vendors offer

white-flowered forms of this plant for sale, which could provide for further spread of this federally listed, noxious weed. Prolific stems — using citrus or other plants for support — can provide enough foliage to severely shade and stunt the hosts.

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 milkweed vine gets entwined into the tree canopy, these herbicides offer little control. Historically, excellent long-term control was obtained with the mycoherbicide DeVine, which was applied to the soil under mature trees to control established vines. Currently, DeVine is not being marketed in Florida. 🍊

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