

Florida milkvine

(*Matelea floridana*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Also known as Florida spiny pod, Florida milkvine is a deciduous twining vine that occurs naturally in sandhills, woodlands and other open habitats. Its small flowers bloom in late spring and summer. They are pollinated mostly by beetles. The plant is a larval host for Monarch, Queen and Soldier butterflies and is a state-listed endangered species.

Flowers are small (less than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long) with five burgundy to reddish-purple petals and a whitish ring in the center. Leaves are narrowly cordate and may be up to 4 inches long. They are oppositely arranged. Leaves and stems exude a white milky latex when crushed or injured. Seeds are born in elongated spiny follicles that dry and split open as the fruit matures. Each seed is attached to a white silky pappus that catches the wind and aids in dispersal. Members of the *Matelea* genus are closely related to milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.).



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich

Family: Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

Native range: Primarily central Panhandle, North and Central Florida; also Miami-Dade
To see where natural populations of Florida milkvine have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8–10

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to dry well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 10+” and sprawling

Propagation: Seed

Florida milkvine is generally not commercially available. Do not harvest wild plants or seeds or purchase them from someone who might have acquired them illicitly.