

## ALABAMA SPINY-POD

*Matelea alabamensis* (Vail) Woods.

**Synonyms:** *Vincetoxicum alabamense* Vail;

*Cyclodon alabamense* (Vail) Small

**Family:** Apocynaceae (dogbane)

**FNAI Ranks:** G2/S2

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Endangered

**Wetland Status:** US-none+ FL-UPL



Alfred R. Schotz

**Field Description:** Perennial twining **vine** with **stems** to 6 feet long. **Leaves** to 6 inches long and almost 5 inches wide, opposite, heart-shaped, deciduous; leaf stalks 1 - 2 inches long. **Flowers** with 5 green petals networked with darker green veins. At the center of the flower, a fleshy, orange disk (**corona**) surrounds the base of the taller, greenish **gynostegium** (fused structure of 5 stamens and pistil). **Fruit** a yellowish-green pod covered with warty, pointed projections. **Seeds** flat with white plumes. All parts of the plant have milky sap.

**Similar Species:** All *Matelea* species are state-listed in FL. Carolina milkvine (*M. flavidula*) has green or yellow net-veined flowers, with the orange disk the same height as the short, greenish-maroon gynostegium. Florida spiny pod (*M. floridana*) has purple-black flowers. Baldwin's spiny pod (*M. baldwiniana*) has white flowers with a corona that appears 10-lobed. Anglepod (*M. gonocarpos*) has

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yellow or greenish-brown petals without a network of veins; pod smooth and angled, without wings or spines. Sandhill spiny pod (*M. pubiflora*) is a low, trailing herb with dull brown-purple flowers and leaves less than 2 inches long.

**Related Rare Species:** All *Matelea* species are state-listed in FL. Carolina milkvine (*M. flavidula*) has green or yellow net-veined flowers, with the orange disk the same height as the short, greenish-maroon gynostegium. Florida spiny pod (*M. floridana*) has purple-black flowers. Baldwin's spiny pod (*M. baldwiniana*) has white flowers with a corona that appears 10-lobed. Anglepod (*M. gonocarpos*) has yellow or greenish-brown petals without a network of veins; pod smooth and angled, without wings or spines. Sandhill spiny pod (*M. pubiflora*) is a low, trailing herb with dull brown-purple flowers and leaves less than 2 inches long.

**Habitat:** Mixed pine - hardwood forests, usually on upper slopes of ravines; bluff forests.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring; April - June with peak in mid-May. Flowers are required for identification.

**Range-wide Distribution:** FL, AL, GA.

**Conservation Status:** Several populations of Alabama spiny pod are protected on Eglin Air Force Base and private conservation lands.

**Protection and Management:** Protect hardwood forests from logging, erosion, and conversion to pine plantations. Allow upland fires to burn into upper edges of hardwood forests. Avoid placing firebreaks in ecotones. Control exotic pest plant species.

**References:** Allison 1996b, Coile 2000, Gordon 1993, Kral 1983, Patrick et al. 1995, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.