

## DEVIL'S SMOOTH-CLAW

*Pisonia rotundata* Griseb.

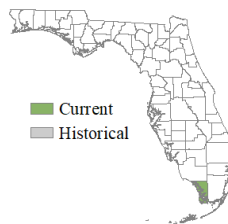
**Synonyms:** *Guapira rotundata* (Griseb.)  
Lundell; *Torrubia rotundata* (Griseb.) Sudw.

**Family:** Nyctaginaceae (four-o'clock)

**FNAI Ranks:** G1G3/S1

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

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



Gil Nelson

**Field Description:** A small **tree or shrub**, in the Lower Keys commonly growing to about 15 feet, especially on Big Pine, though it may be significantly larger on Cudjoe Key. Unarmed, with light gray bark, often with tiny leaf scars. **Leaves** 1 - 4 inches long, opposite, simple, stiff, leathery, dark green, wider above the middle, with inrolled margins and conspicuous, depressed, light-colored veins on upper surface. Leaf tips may be bluntly pointed or indented or neither. **Male and female flowers** on separate trees, tiny, green and white, 5-lobed, without petals; in dense, slightly flattened, rounded clusters one inch or more across. **Fruits** elongated, dry (not fleshy), 5-angled, with rows of sticky, stalked glands near the top.

**Similar Species:** Devil's-claw (*Pisonia aculeata*) is a shrubby or treelike vine with sharp, curved spines. Blolly (*Guapira discolor*) has thin, pale green leaves with inconspicuous veins and red, pulpy fruit. Velvetseed (*Guettarda scabra*) is similar but lower leaf surfaces are densely hairy.

**Related Rare Species:** Burrowing four-o'clock (*Okenia hypogaea*), state-endangered, is a sprawling herb with reddish-purple, long-tubular flowers and leaves and stems covered by sticky glands. Flower stalk elongates and

**devil's smooth-claw**

*Pisonia rotundata*

pushes the fruit under the sand. It occurs on dunes in SE FL.

**Habitat:** Pine rocklands and rockland hammocks.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring-fall; March - May.

**Range-wide Distribution:** South Florida and the West Indies.

**Conservation Status:** Devil's smooth-claw occurs in three conservation areas in the Monroe County Keys.

**Protection and Management:** Protect remaining fragments of rocklands in the Keys. Control exotic pest plants.

**References:** Coile 2000, IRC 1999, Nelson 1996, Small 1933, Stevenson 1969, Tomlinson 1980, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.