

April, 2011

Common Venus' Looking-glass
Triodanis perfoliata or *Specularia perfoliata*



Winter annual or perennial with erect to ascending stems.

Stems usually freely branched at base.

Leaves alternate, ovate to heart shaped and clasp to stem.

Leaf margins have fine teeth.

Tiny Bluish-violet tubular flowers with 5 petals in the leaf axils.

Reproduces by seed.

Found throughout US, except Rocky Mtns.

from: "Weeds of Southern Turfgrasses" a UF, IFAS Extension publication

<http://ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu/p-150-weeds-of-southern-turfgrasses.aspx>

More info and pictures:

http://www.ppws.vt.edu/scott/weed_id/tjdpe.htm

<http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/venusx.htm>



May, 2011

Toadflax or Old field Toadflax

Linaria canadensis or *Nuttallanthus canadensis*

What's with all the pretty flowers now popping up in pastures, roadsides... and maybe your yard?
It may be **toadflax** or **Oldfield Toadflax** (*Linaria canadensis*) or (*Nuttallanthus canadensis*)

About a foot tall when in bloom, with a flat clump of leaves that would hardly ever be noticed, in the cool times of late winter or early spring & summer, it shoots up a foot tall spike that is topped by a dozen or so pink to lavender to blue flowers. A careful look at the individual flowers shows a shape that looks like a snapdragon. Look in roadside ditches, pastures or vacant lots that have not been mowed.

Blue toadflax has small flowers on top of slender stalks. The small flowers and wispy foliage make the plant easy to overlook, but it can be quite abundant in its preferred habitat of sunny, sandy areas. In early summer, many sandy roadsides have a haze of blue from blue toadflax in bloom.

- * Family: Figwort (Scrophulariaceae) • Habitat: dry sandy or rocky soil, abandoned fields, roadsides • Height: 6-24 inches • Flower size: 1/4 to 1/2 inch long • Flower color: pale blue-purple • Flowering time: April to September • Origin: native
- * *Linaria canadensis* grows on open disturbed sand until more permanent plants get established. Typically it will be found sharing this seemingly hostile environment with another diminutive native plant, the dwarf dandelion *rigia virginica*.

Like many plants that evolved to exploit disturbed areas, these plants produce seeds that can be carried for long distances on the wind. But it must be remembered that these are native plants, and are integral parts of the functioning of the sand prairie ecosystem.

Winter annual or biennial; when biennial often forming a dense basal cluster of prostrate stems.

Leaves: linear, those in the basal cluster opposite or whorled; those of the main erect stem usually alternate.

Flowers: blue to purple . Found throughout the US, southern Canada, Mexico and South America

from: "Weeds of Southern Turfgrasses" a UF, IFAS Extension publication

<http://ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu/p-150-weeds-of-southern-turfgrasses.aspx>

and

<http://www.ct-botanical-society.org/galleries/nuttallanthuscana.html>

http://www.missouriplants.com/Bluealt/Linaria_canadensis_page.html



June, 2011
Dollarweed
Hydrocotyle (spp.)

Everyone probably knows this weed..but it's showing up everywhere right now - especially in St Augustine grass!

So here are some interesting facts...and some information about one of our most prevalent lawn weeds.

The Dollar weed name: Most sites say the name is because this plant resembles a silver dollar but:

"Marsh Pennywort is also referred to as "Dollarweed" by the agricultural chemical industry. The Dollarweed moniker is something of a "board room joke" about the inexhaustible market for an herbicide designed to temporarily eradicate plants which will return nevertheless. Product use recommendations for chemical control of Dollarweed generally call for an eternal program of applications at least once or twice a year." from: http://www.floridaplants.com/land_lawns.htm

Dollarweed is Edible! Who knew?? *note: do not eat if treated with herbicide, pesticide or pet waste!!!*

"This lawn weed is an ideal substitute for curly parsley in your favorite recipes. It is quite nutritious, containing magnesium, potassium, phosphorous, iron, copper, sulfur and vitamins A, B1 and C. When harvesting dollar weed, select the young, tender leaves and avoid the tougher, mature leaves. You can also use the dollar weed flower in salads, or as a garnish."

from: <http://bradford.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/CuttingEdgeSeptember09.pdf>

Here's an interesting recipe:

Hot Pepper and Dollarweed Salsa note: You can use habenero or other hot peppers.

8 hot peppers

3 large onions

2 medium bell peppers

1 large can crushed tomatoes

1/4 cup lime juice

6 tbsp. white vinegar

1/2 cup finely chopped dollarweed (or cilantro)

1 tbsp. sea salt

1 tsp. minced garlic

Chop hot peppers, onions and bell peppers mix with tomatoes and remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil. Cover and simmer over low heat for 5 minutes or until desired consistency.

Ladle hot salsa into hot jars, wipe rims, attach lids and rings. Process in boiling water bath. Approximately 15 minutes to 45 minutes until air tight. Makes approximately 10 pints.

May, 2011 continued

Modified recipe from St.Johns County horticulturalist agent, Keith Fuller. http://staugustine.com/stories/080207/food_4732903.shtml

The presence of dollarweed, also known as pennywort, indicates too much water!!

TO identify and control Dollarweed in your lawn:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep389>

<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/weeds/hgic2317.html>

irrigation and dollarweed:

<http://grove.ufl.edu/~turf/weeds/dollarweed.html>



Florida Pusley



Brazil Pusley



Largeflower Pusley

July, 2011 Pusley

Three Pusleys found in our area, look very similar to each other and can be growing side-by-side in lawns, roadsides and disturbed areas. Lawns that are thinning or under water stress provide all the invitation these plants need to become at home in your lawn...and they can be difficult to remove. Regular irrigation to prevent wilting can allow your lawn to compete with the Pusleys.

Florida Pusley aka Rough Mexican Clover, is a non-native weed with a broad distribution in the southeast. It is a low growing and spreading summer annual with branched hairy stems. Regular irrigation to prevent wilting of grass plants can allow a lawn to better compete with this weed.

Brazil Pusley can be an annual or perennial. This plant occurs throughout the state on disturbed sites, roadsides, pastures and lawns. It grows in the southeast from southern Texas along the coastal plain to southeast Virginia.

Largeflower Pusley aka Largeflower Mexican Clover is not of the clover family at all. However, the spent flower heads remind one of red clover seed heads. This native of South America is a widespread tropical weed in Florida, mostly found in the central and southern peninsula. It is found here occasionally.

For more detailed information on characteristics and control methods check out the links below.

<http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu/CommHort/CommHortPubs/TurfDrought.pdf>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fw034>

http://www.allspc.com/broadleaf_floridapusley.htm

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in846>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fw033>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FW/FW03300.pdf>

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2009/dec/03/take-care-if-you-find-mexican-clover-your-grass/>

http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Videos_and_Powerpoints/Richardia_grandiflora.pdf



August, 2011

Common Ragweed
Ambrosia artemisiifolia



During late summer, one of the most colorful plants we see blooming in roadside ditches is goldenrod (*Solidago* sp.), and since hay fever symptoms seem to be worse when it is in bloom, it is often blamed for causing hay fever. However, the true culprit is ragweed.

Both plants begin blooming in summer, but are actually quite different: Goldenrod has masses of bright golden flowers on single-stemmed plants, and has relatively large, heavy pollen grains that are intended for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Common ragweed is an erect, branching summer annual up to 7 ft tall with greenish-yellow flowers that produce tons of pollen, carried by the wind. Ragweed flowers are not showy which means these plants are often easier to recognize by their purplish hairy stems and smooth, but deeply divided leaves. Each Ragweed plant can produce up to 62,000 seeds which can remain viable for many years in undisturbed soil. Dormant ragweed seeds need cold temperatures to germinate and grow best in spring when soil temperatures are 50 to 80° F. Above 86° F germination stops and seeds go dormant until the following winter. Since 75% of all Americans who are allergic to pollen-producing plants are also allergic to ragweed, removal of this pest plant is important.

Homeowners can control this shallow-rooted plant best by hand-pulling, hoeing, or mowing while plants are still young. This should be done as close as possible to the ground to minimize regrowth. However, mowing plants with mature seeds will likely increase seed dispersal.

Common ragweed can be controlled successfully using broad-leaf herbicides such as glyphosate when weeds are less than 6 inches tall.



September, 2011

Common Beggarticks or Spanish Needles



Spanish Needles and has been called *Bidens leucantha*, *Bidens leucanthema*, *Bidens pilosa*, *Coreopsis leucantha*, *Kerneria pilosa* and several other names. They are also known as, shepherd's needles, butterfly needles, hairy beggarticks, beggar's-ticks, stick-tights, and more.

The name "Beggarticks" refers to the copious, sticky seeds that cling to clothes, fur, and hair, and make this plant a fast-spreading nuisance. The bane of any hiker, *Bidens* is zoochorous, that is, it evolved to hitchhike on the fur of animals (and our socks). In spite of its drawbacks, it is a good plant for a Florida native wildflower garden for one reason: butterflies love it. Some gardeners have claimed that its nectar attracts more butterflies than any other plant species. Zebra Longwings, Gulf Fritillaries, Monarchs, Southern Dogfaces, and several hairstreaks are among the beautiful butterflies that seek out this weedy wildflower.

The dried leaves of various species of *Bidens* have been used as a tobacco substitute, called "Fakahatchee Gold," according to Daniel Austin in *Florida Ethnobotany*. The flowers and tender young leaves of *Bidens alba* can be added to salads, and the more mature leaves can be boiled or steamed as a pot herb. A mild tea can be made from the flowers, which purportedly also make an interesting wine.

Thrives in disturbed areas and thinned lawns. Grows best in partly shaded areas. Leaves are opposite and have long stalks and an odd number of leaflets. Center of the flower (disk) is yellow surrounded by 5 to 9 white ray petals. Produces a skinny, shiny, black, needle-like fruit with 2 barbs on tip that can hang on to clothes, hair, or fur.

Plant Type: annual or perennial which can reach 39 inches tall.

Leaves: 3-9 leaflets, alternate, finely toothed and divided. Hairy on the underside.

Flowers: head to 1" (2.5 cm) wide; rays usually 6-8, surrounding yellow central disk. Blooms appear in early spring and continue into late fall. Sometimes the white rays are absent.

Habitat: Fields, borders and waste places.

Range: Florida and the deep south and in extremely scattered locations north. Generally a tropical species.



October, 2011
Virginia Creeper
Parthenocissus quinquefolia



Is it a beautiful vine with wonderful red fall color and berries that songbirds love or is it a weed? You be the judge!

Virginia creeper is a native, perennial, high climbing or trailing woody vine that reaches up to 90' long. This vine produces many seeds, reseeds itself readily and can grow practically anywhere: from moist shade to dry and open places. As a native plant it has the potential to become invasive and often reproduces into nearby landscapes.

It easily grows in the woods or in your garden.

Virginia creeper is a woody, deciduous vine which can be identified by its compound leaves with five leaflets. This benign relative of the Grape can sometimes masquerade as Poison Ivy. Though its compound leaves usually have 5 leaflets, they may also have 3, or 7. Both plants display red pigments in fall and winter. (Poison Ivy **ALWAYS** has 3 leaflets...*Leaves of 3 let it be!*)

Virginia Creeper has long, green to brown stems and climbs by tendrils with adhesive disks that look like the small suction pads on lizards' feet. If you pull a Virginia creeper vine off a wall, fence, or tree, the adhesive disks and parts of the tendrils remain stuck behind. It climbs by many branched tendrils with these adhesive disks or can cover the ground by taking root. Given enough time it can completely cover walls, fences, small buildings, and trees.

The leaves have five leaflets that spread out like fingers on a hand and are longer than they are wide, 2" to 6" long by 1½" to 3" wide. They turn dark red to purple in the fall. In winter they fall off and sprout again in spring.

The fruit is a round berry, ¼" wide, and is black to dark blue when it ripens between October and December. The outside of the fruit is covered in a white, waxy substance.

Songbirds are the principal consumers of Virginia Creeper fruit but woodpeckers, thrushes, deer, squirrels, and other small animals also eat them. Cattle and deer sometimes browse the foliage which also provides cover for many small birds and mammals.

Virginia creeper is salt tolerant and can be used for watershed protection and erosion control.

The bark was once used medicinally.

October, 2011 continued

Virginia creeper can be espaliered against a wall and provides great visual appeal during winter when the leaves have fallen. While it can be used on buildings or trellises, Virginia creeper should probably not be grown on wood siding. Its tendrils will work themselves between the boards and are difficult to remove. Also the dense foliage will dry out slowly after rain, causing a variety of moisture problems for wood siding.

If you find Virginia Creeper is taking over your landscape, you can cut the vine as close to the ground as possible. Immediately paint a concentrated herbicide (glyphosate or triclopyr: vine & stump killer) on the cut stem.

Another option is to utilize a standard floral water pick with a cap. Fill the water pick with your herbicide, and snap on the cap. Cut the weedy vine, leaving about an eight to ten inch stem coming out of the ground. Jab the water pick into the ground next to the vine stem. Carefully bend the stem over and insert it into the water pick. Allow the vine to take up as much herbicide as it can.

You are unlikely to ever totally eliminate this troublesome vine from your landscape. However, you can keep it from overgrowing everything! You can find more information in the following links.

http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/News_Columns/2011/060211g-Controlling-Weedy-Vines-Landscape.pdf

http://www.sfrs.ufl.edu/4h/Virginia_creeper/virgrecree.htm

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp454>

<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/guide/parqui.html>



November, 2011

Wild Grape, Muscadine *Vitis rotundifolia* Michx.



Fall has definitely come to NW Florida! Driving at this time of year the ditches and the wood's edge along the roadsides are brightened with the yellow and gold flowers of Tickseed (*Coreopsis spp.*), Golden Aster (*Chrysopsis spp.*), Silkgrass (*Pityopsis spp.*), Sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*), and Golden-rods (*Solidago spp.*). Climbing high in the trees a vine of gold and scarlet leaves is adding to the show. This is most likely the native wild grapevine Muscadine. A favorite and important food of our wildlife, wild grape can be a weedy, nuisance vine in our gardens.

Wild grape is also known as muscadine, scuppernong, and southern fox grape, and is valued for its edible, tasty fruit. Wild grape grows from Texas to south Florida, north to Delaware, and west to Missouri.

Muscadine grape (*Vitis rotundifolia* Michx.) is a commonly occurring high-climbing woody vine growing to 60'-100' in the wild.

The grape vines will grow in full sun to partial shade.

The leaves are simple, heart shaped, deciduous, and about 4" by 4". The rounded leaves have coarsely serrate edges and are smooth, dark green above and green tinged yellow, somewhat hairy below. They occur alternately along the stem.

Muscadine grape has inconspicuous yellow-green flowers from April through June.

The fruit is a 1" round berry/grape that ripens between July and September. It is green at first, turns red to purple to black with tan spots when ripe. The berries grow in small clusters of no more than 12 or as single grapes. The skin of the fruit is very thick but separates from the flesh of the fruit easily.

It is a favorite food for birds, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, opossum and black bears.

Humans also enjoy the unique fruity flavor of the grapes and make jellies, jams, juices, and wines from the fruit.

Wild grape is prolific because mockingbirds, cardinals, and robins spread the seed to various areas away from the original vine.

Wild Turkey and quail consume fruit that has fallen to the ground.

White-tailed deer readily consume leaves, twigs and the ripe fruit that grows within their reach or have fallen from the vine.

Deer will eat wild grapes no matter where they grow or what variety - in the woods or in your garden!

Commercial production is small, but muscadine grapes are widely grown for home use and local markets in southeastern states.

Native Americans in Florida also made a blue dye from the grapes. Wild grapes have been hybridized and grown since the 1500's. For more information on selection of Muscadine grape varieties and general care please read the University of Florida publication titled "The Muscadine Grape" <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs100>

"If you want to get rid of the vines, first cut them close to the ground. Immediately paint the stump with glyphosate. The upper portion will die once it is cut. It may take a few days but ultimately the vine will die and then it will be easier to remove from the trees. Reapplication of the herbicide may be necessary for best control." <http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/questions/other.html>

December, 2011
Dandelion
Taraxacum officinale



The dandelion is often regarded as being nothing except a weed, but it is much more than that. The scientific name of the dandelion is *Taraxacum officinale*. The common name, Dandelion, comes from French "dent de lion", meaning "lion's tooth", and a reference to the jagged-edges of the leaves. Other names a dandelion may be known as are Faceclock and Blow Ball.

In the language of flowers, the easily identified yellow flower means coquetry, flirt, and love's oracle.

Almost everyone has encountered wild dandelion as a weed pest in lawns and gardens throughout Florida and the U. S. It can grow just about anywhere! Many gardeners spend hours trying to eliminate dandelions from their garden, so it sometimes comes as a surprise to find it grown as a crop. In fact it has a long history of culinary and medicinal use.

There are cultivated varieties of this troublesome weed that make excellent cooking greens and salads. The young leaves are rich in vitamins and minerals. Sauté dandelion heads (before they open) in butter, they taste like mushrooms! The roots are used to make a coffee-substitute, and home winemakers use the flowers and the leaves. *Note: do not eat any weed that has been treated with chemicals or fertilizer!* Dandelion is grown in gardens on an infrequent basis, and is produced on a rather large scale by a few commercial growers in Florida. Dandelion seed can be bought from some nurseries, and the selections they offer are likely to be superior to wild dandelions.

DESCRIPTION

Dandelions originated in Europe. It is a cool season perennial that can also reproduce by seeds. Its low spreading, deeply notched leaves form a rosette pattern as they emerge from a weak central tap root. It closely resembles endive in form and in cultural requirements. The hollow flower stalks form a single compound flower of many golden colored florets. Varieties differ in leaf shape, ranging from very curly leaved to broad leaved.

Bear in mind that the deep tap roots are difficult to lift without leaving some root behind, which is why dandelions are so difficult to eradicate. Deadhead before it self-seeds.

edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mv058

<http://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/chiwonlee/plsc211/newsletter/jstencil.htm>

<http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu/Horticulture/PDF/MGNewsletter/Dec%2008%20MG%20NL%20for%20emailing%2020web.pdf>