



# Invasive Species Management Plans for Florida

# Cats Claw Vine

## *Macfadyena unguis-cati* (L.) Bignoniaceae

### INTRODUCTION

*Macfadyena unguis-cati*, or Cats claw vine, is a native from West Indies and Mexico to Argentina. In Florida populations have been documented in several counties, including Escambia, Alachua, Seminole, Brevard, Hillsborough, Hernando, and Dade counties. Cats claw vine gets its name from the 3-pronged claw-like climbing appendages that are used to grasp onto plants or surfaces. Cats claw vine is considered a Category I exotic invasive by Florida's Exotic Pest Plant Council.

### DESCRIPTION

Cats claw vine is a high-climbing woody vine that can grow up to 50 feet in length, often rooting at the node. The dark green leaves are opposite, compound, with small, wide leaflets that mature into ovate or lanceolate shaped leaves. Stems are vine-like and covered with lenticels. Tendrils are forked, with the tip being claw like. The flowers are trumpet shaped, yellow in color, 3 inches long and 4 inches across. These are solitary or in axillary clusters. Fruit capsules are linear and flat, roughly 20 inches long containing oblong, winged seeds that are wind-dispersed. Tubers are produced by both young and mature plants and allow for regrowth. This species is very similar in appearance to the native cross-vine (*Bignonia capreolata*), but the cross-vine possesses red-orange flowers.

### IMPACTS

Cats claw vine is a long lived plant that grows relatively slow. As the plant matures, typically in its second year, root tubers and stolons form. Tubers and stolons can also form at each node if the vine is creeping along the soil surface. Pursuant to its rooting abilities, a dense mat will cover the forest floor and smother native vegetation. Areas that are susceptible to invasion to cats claw include river or stream banks, near human habitations, and undisturbed hammocks.

### MANAGEMENT

Preventative: The first step in preventative control of cats claw vine is to limit planting and removal of existing plants within the landscape. If possible, removal should occur before seeds are produced. Care must be exercised to prevent seed spread and dispersal during the removal process.

Cultural: Inform the public to refrain from purchasing, propagating, or planting cats claw vine due to its ability to escape into natural areas.

Mechanical: Continuous cutting or mowing will provide eventual control, but this process could take several months or years to deplete the reserves of larger plants. During this process it is essential to prevent seed formation.

Biological: There are no known biological control agents for cats claw vine.

Chemical: Current chemical controls include cutting the vines and painting the cut ends with glyphosate (100% solution) herbicide. Triclopyr may provide good control as well (100% solution as a basal bark treatment) or 1-2% foliar spray with surfactant.

#### REFERENCES AND USEFUL LINKS:

Floridata Homepage: <http://www.floridata.com>

University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants:  
<http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/welcome.html>

University of Florida's Cooperative Extension Electronic Data Information Source:  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/index.html>

Langeland, K.A. and K. Craddock Burks. 1998. Identification and Biology of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. IFAS Publication SP 257. University of Florida, Gainesville. 165 pp.

The Plant Conservation Alliance's Alien Plant Working Group. Weeds Gone Wild: Alien Plant Invaders of Natural Areas: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/index.htm>

Pacific Island Ecosystems at Risk (PIER). Plant Threats to Pacific Ecosystems:  
<http://www.hear.org/pier/threats.htm>

Invasive Plants of the Eastern United States: <http://www.invasive.org>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Plants Database: <http://plants.usda.gov>

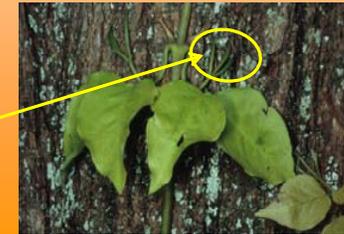
## Mature Plant

- Climbing vine, but not twining
- Produces a large tuber that allows for regrowth
- Stems covered with lenticels (small pits)



## Leaves and Tendrils

- Oppositely arranged
- Dark green and compound with 2 leaflets
- Tendrils forked with distinct “claws”



## Flowers and Fruit

- Flowers are yellow, trumpet shaped, 3 inches long
- Fruit capsules are linear and flat, 20 inches long
- Seeds are winged and wind dispersed

