

MACFADYENA UNGUIS-CATI (L.) A. GENTRY

Bignoniaceae/Bignonia Family

Common Name: Cat's-claw vine

Synonymy: *Doxantha unguis-cati* (L.) Rehd., *Bignonia unguis-cati* L., *Bignonia tweediana* Lindley

Origin: Tropical America

Botanical Description: High-climbing woody vine, with stems to 6 cm (2.4 in) in diameter and roots becoming elongate-tuberous with age. Branches and runners with adventitious aerial roots. Leaves opposite, compound, with 2 leaflets and a terminal 3-forked tendril; tips of tendril forks stiffly hooked, clawlike. Leaflets mostly 3-7 cm (1-3 in) long, oval to lance shaped, with margins entire. Flowers showy, trumpet shaped, to 7 cm (3 in) long and 10 cm (4 in) across, solitary or in few-flowered clusters at leaf axils; petals joined into yellow floral tube with orange lines in the throat. Fruit a linear, flat capsule, to 50 cm (20 in) long, with oblong, winged seeds.

NOTE: Distinguished from the native cross-vine, *Bignonia capreolata* L., by its yellow (rather than orange-red) floral tubes and clawlike tendril forks. From a distance, when flowering, may be confused with yellow trumpet-flowered native jessamines (*Gelsemium* spp.), but their leaves simple and without tendrils.

Ecological Significance: Introduced for ornament before 1947 and noted as grown outdoors in the South (Bailey and Bailey 1947). Persistent around former habitations in south Florida (Long and Lakela 1971). Cultivated in northern Florida and naturalized near human habitations (Godfrey 1988, Hall 1993). Rapidly becomes an obnoxious weed (Dickey 1968). Considered a pest in many places (Odenwald and Turner 1980); a “troublesome weed” in southern Florida, “not recommended” (Nelson 1996). Increasingly spreading into natural areas in northern Florida (D. B. Ward, University of Florida, 1994 personal communication). Has become dominant ground cover in undisturbed hammocks by Lake George; extremely difficult to control tuberous roots (L. Grant, St. Johns Water Management District, 1997 personal communication). Also reported as rapidly spreading in 4 hammock preserves in Dade County (EPPC 1996).



Tendrils, leaflets

Distribution: Native from West Indies and Mexico to Argentina (Bailey and Bailey 1976, Morton 1971a). Herbarium specimens now recorded for naturalized populations in Escambia, Leon, Alachua, Lake, Seminole, Brevard, Polk, Hillsborough, Hernando, Palm Beach, and Dade counties (Wunderlin *et al.* 1996). Also cultivated in Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina (Meyer *et al.* 1994).

Life History: Thrives in full sun or partial shade and in a wide variety of soils (Morton 1971a, Nelson 1996). Stays at seedling stage for some time, while enlarging roots into tuberlike storage organs; then rapidly elongates stems, forming long runners when no erect substrate is within reach (Godfrey 1988). Clings tenaciously to any substrate with adventitious roots and clawed tendrils (Godfrey 1988). Flowers in spring, with high seed production (Menninger 1970), but may not begin flowering until vine is well established (Odenwald and Turner 1980). Seeds dispersed by wind (Dickey 1968).

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Linear capsules

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On campus grounds, Alachua County