



Common Name: TRAILING MILKVINE

Scientific Name: *Matelea pubiflora* (Decaisne) Woodson

Other Commonly Used Names: trailing spiny-pod, sandhill spiny pod

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Edisonia pubiflora* (Decaisne) Small, *Gonolobus pubiflorus* (Decaisne) Gray, *Vincetoxicum pubiflorum* (Decaisne) Heller

Family: Asclepiadaceae (milkweed) or Apocynaceae (dogbane)

Rarity Ranks: G3G4/S2

State Legal Status: Rare

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Vine-like **herb** with stems 8 - 43 inches (20 - 110 cm) long, trailing along the ground or, rarely, climbing on nearby plants. **Leaves** $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 inches (2 - 5 cm) long, heart-shaped,

opposite. **Flower clusters** in the angle between leaf and stem, each with 2 - 5 flowers. **Flowers** about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (1 cm) wide, with 5 olive-green or reddish-brown petals conspicuously covered on the upper surface with long, white hairs. **Fruit** a spiny, cucumber-like pod $2\frac{3}{8}$ - $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches (6 - 11 cm) long and $\frac{3}{8}$ - 1 inch (1 - 2.5 cm) wide. All parts of the plant exude **milky sap** if broken.

Similar Species: Other *Matelea* species twine up nearby plants and have much larger leaves. No other *Matelea* species has conspicuously hairy flowers.

Related Rare Species: Limerock milkvine (*Matelea obliqua*, Special Concern) occurs in Floyd County in the Coosa Valley flatwoods, and in Walker and Catoosa Counties in deciduous forests over limestone. It is a hairy, twining vine with heart-shaped leaves 3.5 - 6 inches (9 - 15 cm) long and $2\frac{3}{4}$ - 5 inches (7 - 13 cm) wide. Its flowers have 5 narrow, maroon or cream-colored petals. The fruit is a spiny pod up to 4 inches (6 - 10 cm) long. Also see Alabama milkvine (*M. alabamensis*) on this website.

Habitat: Dry, sandy soils of sandhills and sand ridges, usually with longleaf pine and turkey oak.

Life History: Trailing milkvine is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually. Its flowers are pollinated by flies which visit the flowers to obtain nectar. Flowers remain open for 5 - 6 days. When a fly inserts its proboscis into a flower, a packet of pollen may stick to the underside of the proboscis; the packet may then be transferred to a flower on the next plant the fly visits, although this actually happens fairly infrequently. Trailing milkvine fruits mature in late summer and fall, when they split open to release hundreds of tufted seeds that are dispersed by the wind.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (April–June) and fruiting (August–October).

Range: Georgia and Florida.

Threats: Fire suppression, conversion of habitat to pine plantations, agriculture, golf courses, and developments.

Georgia Conservation Status: Approximately 20 populations are known, 4 on conservation land.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3 years. Prevent conversion of sandhills to golf courses, pine plantations, pasture, and developments. Limit access by off-road vehicles.

Selected References:

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Date Compiled or Updated:

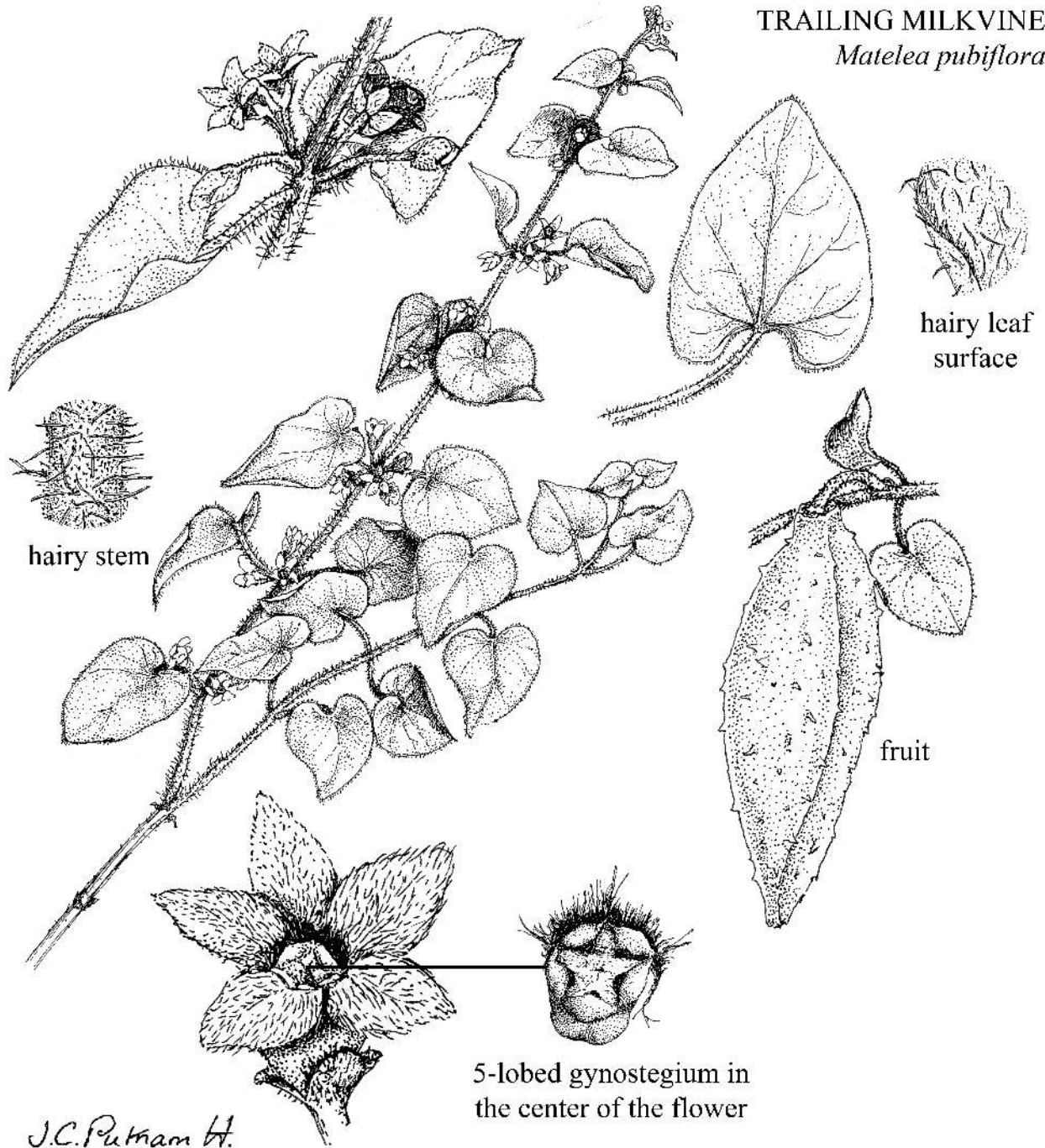
L. Chafin, June 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures



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TRAILING MILKVINE
Matelea pubiflora





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