Alfred R. Schotz

ALABAMA SPINY POD
Matelea alabamensis (Vail) Woodson
Synonyms: Vincetoxicum alabamense Vail
Cyclodon alabamense (Vail) Small
Family: Asclepiadaceae (milkweed)
FNAI Ranks: G1/S1
Legal Status: US–Mgmt Concern FL–Endangered
Wetland Status: US–UPL FL–UPL

Field Description: Perennial twining vine with stems to 6 feet long. Leaves to 6 inches long and almost 5 inches wide, opposite, heart-shaped, deciduous; leaf stalks 1 - 2 inches long. Flowers with 5 green petals networked with darker green veins. At the center of the flower, a fleshy, orange disk (corona) surrounds the base of the taller, greenish gynostegium (fused structure of 5 stamens and pistil). Fruit a yellowish-green pod covered with warty, pointed projections. Seeds flat with white plumes. All parts of the plant have milky sap.

Similar and Related Rare Species: All Matelea species are state-listed in FL. Carolina milkvine (M. flavidula) has green or yellow net-veined flowers, with the orange disk the same height as the short, greenish-maroon gynostegium. Florida spiny pod (M. floridana) has purple-black flowers. Baldwin’s spiny pod (M. baldwiniana) has white flowers with a corona that appears 10-lobed. Anglepod (M. gonocarpos) has yellow or greenish-brown petals without a network of veins; pod smooth and angled, without wings or spines. Sandhill spiny pod (M. pubiflora) is a low, trailing herb with dull brown-purple flowers and leaves less than 2 inches long.

Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2000
Alabama spiny pod  

*Matelea alabamensis*

**Habitat:** Mixed pine–hardwood forests, usually on upper slopes of ravines.

**Best Survey Season:** Alabama spiny pod blooms April–June with peak in mid-May. Flowers are required for identification.

**Range-wide Distribution:** FL, AL, GA.

**Conservation Status:** Several populations of Alabama spiny pod are protected on Eglin Air Force Base and private conservation lands.

**Protection & Management:** Protect hardwood forests from logging, erosion, and conversion to pine plantations. Allow upland fires to burn into upper edges of hardwood forests. Avoid placing firebreaks in ecotones. Control exotic pest plant species.