

AMERICAN MELONLEAF

Cayaponia americana (Lam.) Cogn.

Synonyms: none

Family: Cucurbitaceae (squash)

FNAI Ranks: GNR/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Closeup of flower. © Keith Bradley.

Field Description: **Vines** herbaceous. **Stems** sulcate, glabrous; tendrils unbranched. **Leaves:** petiole 1 - 5 cm, glabrous; blade ovate to deltate or pentagonal, unlobed or shallowly to deeply 3 - 5-lobed, 5 - 14 by 5 - 13 cm, terminal lobe oblong-lanceolate, broadest at base, lateral lobes often sublobed, base cordate to truncate or rounded, margins remotely serrulate or denticulate, surfaces hirsute-hispidulous abaxially (not white-sericeous), pustulate-scabrous adaxially. **Flowers:** sepals deltate to triangular, 1 - 2 mm; petals pale green to whitish, corolla 6 - 10 mm; pistillate flowers solitary, axillary, or 3 - 5 on short racemoid branches, staminate flowers solitary, axillary. **Fruits** usually 1, axillary, or 3 - 5 on racemoid branches, orange to golden brown, short ellipsoid-cylindric, 1.5 - 2 cm; peduncle 8 - 15 (-30) mm. **Seeds** usually 3, 10 mm. (FNA 2023)

American melonleaf

Cayaponia americana

Similar Species: The leaf blades are darker and thicker and peduncle length is greater than found in five-lobe cucumber (*Cayaponia quinqueloba*) (FNA 2023).

Related Rare Species: There are no related rare species.

Habitat: Rockland hammocks, in tree-fall gaps

Best Survey Season: Flowering May-August

Range-wide Distribution: Miami-Dade County, West Indies.

Conservation Status: Species only known from a single location, protected on a conservation land, in the vulnerable rockland hammock habitat.

Protection and Management: Since there is only one known population, care should be taken to ensure that regular prescribed burns occur and invasive species do not encroach on the habitat.

References: Florida of North America (FNA) 2023, Weakley 2023