

PAEDERIA FOETIDA L.

Rubiaceae/Madder Family

Common Names: Skunk vine, Chinese fever vine

Synonymy: *Paederia scandens* Lour., *P. chinensis* Hance, *P. tomentosa* Blume

Origin: Eastern and southern Asia

Botanical Description: Perennial twining vine from woody rootstock; stems to 7 m (23 ft) or more, climbing, or prostrate and rooting at the nodes. Leaves opposite (rarely in whorls of 3), with conspicuous stipules; petioles commonly to 6 cm (2.4 in) long; blades entire, oval to linear-lanceolate, 2-11 cm (1-4.3 in) long, hairy or glabrous, often lobed at base; leaves and stems with disagreeable odor, especially when crushed. Flowers small, grayish pink or lilac, in broad or long, “leafy,” curving clusters, terminal or at leaf axils; corolla densely hairy, tubular with 5 (usually) spreading lobes. Fruit a shiny brown, nearly globose capsule, to 0.7 cm (0.3 in) wide, with 2 black, roundish seeds, these often dotted with white raphides.

NOTE: May be confused with the closely related, also naturalized, sewer vine, *P. cruddasiana* Prain, but its fruits oval, flattened, with distinctly winged seeds.

Ecological Significance: Introduced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture before 1897 as a potential fiber plant; by 1916 already “a troublesome weed” around the Brooksville Field Station (Morton 1976). Noted as escaping to thickets and fence rows in peninsular Florida by Small (1933). Considered an economically important weed by 1977 (Reed 1977). Occurs most often in tree gaps and other disturbed areas in its native range (Puff 1991). In Florida, invades various native plant communities, including sandhill, floodplain, and upland mixed forest. Can create dense canopies leading to damage or death of native vegetation (Gann and Gordon 1998). In Orange County, found in relatively wet areas, growing on wetland natives such as dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine* L.). Has smothered out portions of one of the few remaining populations of the endemic, federally endangered Cooley’s water willow (*Justicia cooleyi* Monachino & Leonard) (S. Bowman, Native Plant Society, and D. Martin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1995 personal communications). Reported from nearly 20 natural areas in Hillsborough, Hernando, Pasco, Citrus, Marion, Sumter, Lake, Orange, and Polk counties (EPPC 1996).

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Flowers, leaves

Distribution: Occurs most commonly in west central Florida, but also documented northward to Suwannee and Gadsden counties by herbarium specimens (Wunderlin *et al.* 1996) and by sight records for Duval County (Martin 1995) and Franklin County (W. Miley, Apalachicola National Estuarine Reserve, 1996 personal communication). Also naturalized in Louisiana and South Carolina, although perhaps not persisting there (Gann-Matzen 1994). A principal or common weed in Hawaii, present as a weed in Brazil; in its native range, a serious weed in New Guinea (Holm *et al.* 1979).

Life History: Fast-growing; shows wide-ranging adaptability to different light, soil, and salt conditions (Puff 1991). Able to establish and grow above the frost line, though some leaves may turn yellow-red or drop following a freeze (G. Greger, City of Winter Park, and K. C. Burks, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, personal observations). Sensitive to fire (Gann and Gordon 1998). Flowers and fruits mostly in summer and fall; seeds may be dispersed by birds (Gann-Matzen 1994). May also be spread by accidental transport of rooted fragments.

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Mature fruits

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**Growing over native vegetation,
Pasco County**