

## Don't Get Skunked!

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Do you have vine in your yard that emits a foul odor when cut? Then you may have the “new” and “popular” vine that other Thomas County residents have. Skunk vine (*Paederia foetida*) was originally imported from Asia sometime around 1897 as possible fiber crop. Well, needless to say, it did not beat out cotton as a fiber crop. Rather it is now an invasive species.

It is an extremely aggressive vine that can grow densely high into canopies of trees or shrubs in the landscape. This dense growth can damage plants or shade them out, leading to death. Skunk vine generally prefers sunny areas and low lying areas. Some research has shown that it can grow even under water. I wonder if skunk vine could be the new bio mass for ethanol???

Skunk vine stems typically to grow to 30 feet long, and reportedly “invariably twine to the right.” The medium green leaf blades are rounded heart shaped and have long pointed tips. The vine has flowers that are small and range in color from off white to grayish pink, with red centers. The fruit are small, glossy brown orbs containing 2 black seeds. It is not known if seeds dispersed by animals, however mocking birds are reported to feed on its seeds.

Effective control can be difficult but it is possible. Hand removal and proper disposal of skunk vine is a good method of control as long as the seeds or stem fragments are not allowed to root. Cutting stems will cause the upper parts to die, but the lower part will continue to grow. Herbicides that contain the active ingredients triclopyr amine (Garlon 3A and Brush-B-Gone), triclopyr ester (Garlon 4), and imazapic (Plateau) provide effective control. Garlon 3A, Garlon 4, and Plateau are available at agriculture supply stores. Brush-B-Gon is available at hardware and garden supply stores. One method of application is to remove as much skunk vine by hand and then use a paint brush to paint the end of the cut vine with the herbicide. This can help reduce damage to other plants.

Complete control is not achieved with a single application; follow-up applications are necessary. Avoid contact of herbicides with sensitive non-target vegetation. Always use herbicides according to all directions on the label.

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