

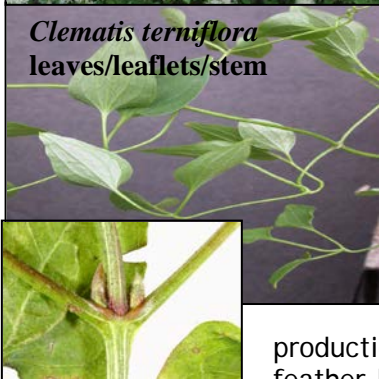
# GREEN GONE BAD

## Featured Ornamental Plant: *Clematis terniflora*

Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on natural environments. One of these plants is *Clematis terniflora*; common name: sweet autumn virginsbower.



*Clematis terniflora*  
leaves/leaflets/stem

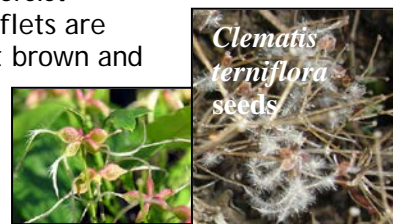


*Clematis terniflora* is a climbing, semi-evergreen, twining ornamental vine which has been observed and recorded growing outside of cultivation in South Carolina, especially near creeks. It can be seen growing wild in urban areas and creeping into adjacent natural communities. *Clematis terniflora* is in the family Ranunculaceae (buttercup or crowfoot family). It is native to Japan, Korea, and China and has been cultivated as an ornamental plant in the United States since 1877. Alternate common names include leatherleaf clematis, yam-leaved clematis. This species is synonymous with and is sometimes sold as *Clematis maximowicziana* and *Clematis dioscoreifolia*.

*Clematis terniflora* stems climb with tendril-like petioles and leaf rachises. Leaves are opposite, compound, with 3-5 elliptic leathery leaflets that are shiny and able to persist through mild winters. Leaf margins are entire. Leaflets are each 2-3 inches (5-7.6 cm) long. Mature bark is light brown and shreds longitudinally. Abundant white, fragrant, four-petaled flowers appear in late summer through the fall. Seeds are also showy and production is prolific. Seed heads have long, silvery-gray, feather-like hairs attached.



*Clematis terniflora* leaflet



*Clematis terniflora*  
seeds

The problem with *Clematis ternifolia* is the vigorous, extremely rampant growth habit. If given support, it will climb rapidly with the aid of tendrilous leaf petioles to 20-25 feet in length. Without support, it will sprawl along the ground as a dense, tangled ground cover (to 6-12 inches tall and 10 feet wide) which typically chokes out most other vegetation. *Clematis terniflora* can aggressively self-seed in the landscape, and has escaped cultivation and become invasive, particularly in the East and Midwest.

*Clematis terniflora* flowers



Once *Clematis terniflora* escapes cultivation, it invades roadsides, thickets, and woods edges near creeks. From there, this species begins to degrade the quality of natural areas by overtaking, crowding, and shading out native plant species. *Clematis terniflora* is capable of killing saplings and sometimes fully grown trees. Habitats become altered through decreased light availability, decreased space, and depleted soil moisture and nutrients. *Clematis terniflora* inhibits the growth of other plants, especially legumes.

Be aware of the beautiful native *Clematis virginiana* (devil's darning needles, virgin's bower, old man's beard) when identifying or shopping. The native is similar in appearance except that the margins of leaflets tend to be toothed the leaves are trifoliate. The native is not as prone to self-seeding and spreading.

It may not be widely known among horticulturalists and landscapers that this plant can be harmful to natural habitats. Please consider removing this species from your inventory. Native plants such as passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*), Dutchman's pipe (*Aristolochia macrophylla*), trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*), coral honeysuckle (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), and of course the native Virgin's bower (*Clematis virginiana*) are excellent substitutes in landscaping and for wildlife and pollinators. Visit <http://www.se-eppc.org/ky/leastwanted12b.pdf> and <http://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=5354> for details

*Clematis virginiana* (native)



See also: <http://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/> and <http://www.se-eppc.org/>

