Tradescantia fluminensis Vell.

Common Name: Green wandering-Jew, white-flowered wandering-Jew
Synonymy: T. albiflora Kunth
Origin: Tropical South America
Botanical Description: Creeping, trailing, subsucculent perennial herb, much branched, with branch tips erect; often forming dense ground cover; prostrate stems rooting freely at nodes. Leaves parallel veined, alternate, simple, all glossy green or tinged with purple below; leaf blades arising from short, closed sheaths (tops often ciliate); blades to 5 cm (2 in) long and 2 cm (0.75 in) wide, oblong to ovate, with tips pointed, glabrous or with ciliate margins. Flowers white, in small clusters at stem tips, subtended by 1-3 leaflike bracts similar in size and form to stem leaves; 3 sepals and petals, separate; sepals usually with a line of hairs; 6 stamens, white bearded (pilose); ovary 3-celled, 6-seeded. Fruits small, 3-parted capsules; seeds black, pitted.
Ecological Significance: Occurs most densely in partial or full shade of disturbed and undisturbed hammocks, particularly in moist or wet areas but also in well-drained woodlands and shady residential yards. Forms dense monocultural ground cover that can be 60 cm (2 ft) deep in overlapping leafy stems (Kelly and Skipworth 1984). Smothers native ground cover and seedlings of overstory species (K.C. Barks, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2001 personal observation; Godfrey and Wooten 1979); acts similarly in remnant lowland forests of New Zealand (Kelly and Skipworth 1984), where it has become an important natural-area pest. Also a weed of disturbed areas in New South Wales, Australia (Reed 1977b), and an agricultural weed in its native range, particularly Brazil (Kelly and Skipworth 1984). Recognized in 1947 (Bailey and Bailey 1947) as a common weed under benches in commercial greenhouses, and as naturalized in the Southeast (Bailey and Bailey 1976). Noted as naturalized in sandy woods and waste places from Florida to North Carolina (Small 1933), but in later works shown only for Florida (e.g., Radford et al. 1968, Godfrey and Wooten 1979). Still cultivated, most often as a house or patio plant. Once established, difficult to control without nontarget damage (J. Weimer, Paynes Prairie Preserve, 1996 pers. comm.).
Distribution: Found most abundantly naturalized in north central Florida, from Gainesville to Orlando, but documented by herbarium specimens from 11 counties, including Calhoun and Leon in the Panhandle, Flagler on the east coast, and Hillsborough on the west (Wunderlin and Hansen 2004). Has also been reported in natural areas from St. Johns, Alachua, Marion, Pinellas, St. Lucie, Broward, and Palm Beach counties (FLEPPC 2005). Several dense populations noted in bottomland forests, scrub, sandhill, upland pine forests, hardwood hammocks, mesic flatwoods, strand swamps, and ruderal communities.
Life History: Spreads successfully by vegetative means; stem fragments with just 1 node remaining viable and rooting freely (Kelly and Skipworth 1984). May have main stems averaging 1.5 m (5 ft) long, with an additional 1.5 m of branches; a dense square meter of cover potentially supporting a standing crop of 900 m (2,880 ft) of plant (Kelly and Skipworth 1984). Flowers in spring and fall in north Florida; level of seed viability not known. Resists cold to -4ºC (25ºF) in laboratory experiments (Bannister 1986). Cultivars with variegated leaves apparently revert to full green in shade (IMP 1985). Can be used as larval host for native noctuid moth, Mouralia tinctoides (Guenè), a species related to cabbage and soybean loopers but not reported as a pest itself (Landolt 1993).