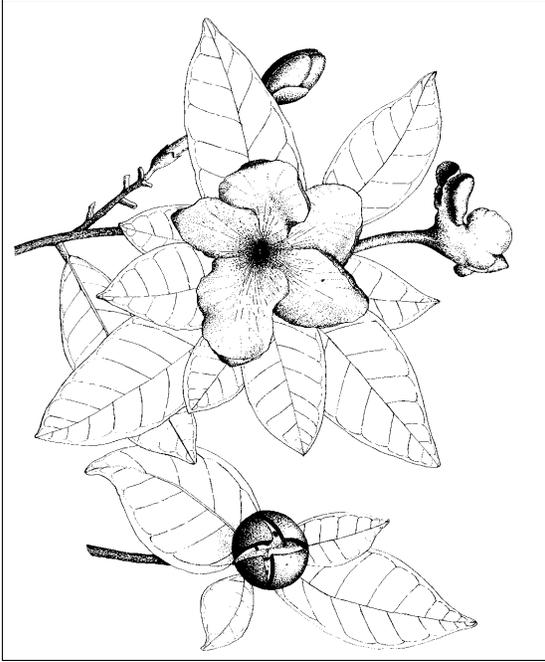


***Brunfelsia lactea* Krug & Urban**
SOLANACEAE

jasmín del monte

Synonyms: none



General Description.—Jasmín del monte (a Puerto Rican name), also known as aguacero, vega blanca, dama de noche, is an evergreen shrub or occasionally a small tree. It has been recorded to 7 m in height and 10 cm in stem diameter but usually measures only 1 to 3 m in height. Older plants tend to have multiple stems and many, often intertwining branches. The bark is light brown, slightly furrowed, and usually covered with mosses and liverworts. The inner bark is white. The wood is light brown, hard, and brittle. Plants are supported by a tap and lateral root system of light brown, somewhat brittle roots. Roots sometimes arise from the lower trunk. The leathery foliage is moderately abundant. Dark green leaves are elliptic, oval, or obovate, 5 to 15 cm long and 2.5 to 6.5 cm broad, and have petioles 5 to 15 mm long. The flowers are solitary at the terminus of twigs. They are strikingly fragrant, particularly at night. White or pale yellow, later tinged with purple, the corolla is trumpet shaped, 5 to 7 cm long and 5 to 6 cm across, with five rounded lobes. Purple to light brown, fleshy fruits (berries) are globose, 2 to 2.5 cm in diameter and contain many 4-mm brown, elliptic seeds (Liogier 1995, Little and others 1974).

Range.—Jasmín del monte is endemic to high-elevation forests in eastern Puerto Rico (Liogier 1995, Little and others 1974) and is confined to only a few locations. The species has been grown widely in greenhouses and gardens, but there is no record of it naturalizing.

Ecology.—Dwarf forests at the summits of mountains are the habitat of jasmín del monte. These areas lie between 980 and 1,100 m in elevation (Little and others 1974) and receive more than 3000 mm of mean annual precipitation. The soils are clayey over igneous rocks with pH's between 5 and 6 and are saturated in their subsoils most of the time. As an ornamental, jasmín del monte blooms in partial shade (Gehrke 2000). In natural habitat, the species can survive under forest canopies but requires broken or full sunlight to flower and fruit. Hurricane-force winds impact the mountain tops where the species grows every one to few decades, uprooting trees and defoliating the forest. This disturbance, plus occasional landslides, probably allows adult plants of jasmín del monte to flower and fruit and seedlings to establish themselves. In recent years, the disturbance of road cuts and other construction have created additional habitat for the species. The minimum overwintering temperature for jasmín del monte as an ornamental is 10 °C (Kuipplantenkwekerij Gommer 2003).

Reproduction.—Jasmín del monte flowers throughout the year (Little and others 1974). There are good fruit and seed production. A collection of fresh fruits weighed from 2 to 8 g each. Air-dried seed separated from those fruits averaged 0.0062 ± 0.0002 g/seed. Sown without pretreatment in commercial potting mix, 13 percent germinated between 1 and 3 months after sowing. Germination is epigeal. Seedlings are relatively common in disturbed patches near seed-bearing shrubs but rare elsewhere. Stems layer (root) whenever they come in contact with the ground. Cut roots and stems produce sprouts.

Growth and Management.—Jasmín del monte grows slowly in its natural habitat and appears to be long-lived. The author knows of no wildland plantings or intentional management. Because the

species reproduces after disturbance, soil unavoidably exposed during construction and road work should be left in good tilled condition to encourage seedling establishment.

Benefits.—Jasmín del monte helps hold the soil, provides cover and probably food for wildlife, and adds to the aesthetics of the forest. The species is planted as an ornamental in gardens and greenhouses and is available for purchase from a number of commercial nurseries.

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