

Clibadium erosum (Sw.) DC.
ASTERACEAE

carruzo

Synonyms: *Trixis erosa* Sw.



General Description.—Carruzo, also known as jackass breadnut, cachimbo, tuchima, turma de toro, bois énivrant, and medsinnyé benni, is a shrub or small tree up to 6 m in height and 10 cm in basal stem diameter. These plants have a single stem from the ground, unless damaged, and are much branched in the crown. The trunk bark is gray to greenish brown, smooth to slightly fissured. The white wood is soft to medium in hardness, brittle, without annual rings, and has a 3-mm pith. The plant often breaks at forked stems. Carruzo plants are supported by a root system of tan, flexible laterals and may or may not retain a taproot. The twigs are ringed at the nodes by opposite, three-lobbed leaf scars and densely pubescent. The leaves are broadly ovate, with long, 2- to 8.5-cm petioles, coarsely and finely incised-dentate, and have an elongated tip. The inflorescences are many-branched clusters (corymbs) containing many heads with white to rose-purple flowers. Several black, 2- by 1.5-mm, seed-like fruits (akenes) are produced per flower (Howard 1989, Liogier 1997, Little and Wadsworth 1964).

Range.—Carruzo is native to Puerto Rico, St. Martin, Saba, St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Costa Rica, and Panama (Howard 1989,

Missouri Botanical Garden 2003). The species is not known to have been planted or naturalized elsewhere.

Ecology.—Carruzo is a species of moist and wet mountains. It grows at elevations above about 400 m in Puerto Rico and it is reported from 800 and 1,300 to 1,500 m in Costa Rica (Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad 1997, Missouri Botanic Garden 2003). Mean annual rainfall of its habitat in Puerto Rico ranges from 2000 to over 4000 mm/year. The soils are mostly clayey, derived from a variety of rock types, anaerobic in their subsoils, and have pH's between 5 and 6. Because the species is light-demanding, it grows mainly in disturbed areas (Little and Wadsworth 1964) such as roadsides, cuts and fills, landslides, tree-tip mounds, logged areas, plantations, fields, and abandoned construction sites. Once established, carruzo competes aggressively with grass, herbs, and shrubs of equal or lesser height. Overtopped, it soon dies.

Reproduction.—Carruzo flowers and fruits nearly throughout the year, at least in Puerto Rico (Little and Wadsworth 1964). Fruits are produced in great numbers. A group of akenes harvested in Puerto Rico averaged 0.001867 g/fruit or 536,000 fruits/kg. The author could not germinate the hard akenes on moist blotter paper. Some sort of pretreatment is probably necessary. Fruits can be collected in quantity by hand. Means of dispersal is unknown. Seedlings are common on disturbed ground near seed sources. Carruzo shrubs will sprout if disturbed and will layer if intact stems come in contact with the ground.

Growth and Management.—Carruzo grows rapidly, adding 1 to 1.5 m/year to its height. It begins flowering and fruiting after about 1 year and probably lives 2 to 5 years. There is no published record of planting or propagation techniques. Because it grows rapidly and thickly in disturbed areas, carruzo sometimes becomes weedy in fields, plantations, and along roads. Stands along roads are routinely controlled by mowing.

Benefits.—Carruzo helps protect the soil in disturbed areas, serves as a nurse species for later successional species, and provides cover and possibly food for wildlife.

References

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