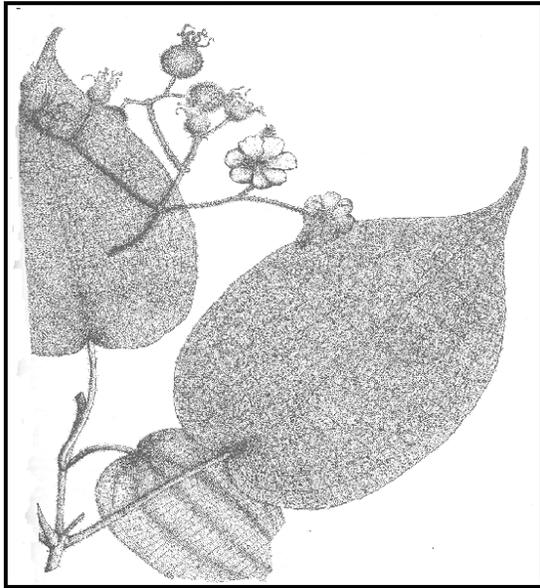


*Clidemia cymosa* (Wendl. ex Spreng.) Alain  
MELASTOMATACEAE

camasey peludo

Synonyms: *Heterotrichum cymosum* (Wendl.) Urban  
*Melastoma cymosa* Wendl. in Spring.  
*Heterotrichum eggertii* Cogn.



**General Description.**—Camasey peludo, which means hairy melastome, is also known locally as camasey colorado, camasey de paloma, pelúa, and terciopelo. It is a medium to large shrub to 4.5 m in height and 7.5 cm in trunk diameter. Shrubs 1.5 to 2.5 m in height are typical. The stems may be single or multiple. The bark is thin, gray-brown, and smooth or slightly fissured. There are relatively few branches. The twigs are red or orange near the tips due to a thick covering of reddish hairs, greenish below, becoming brown as they grow older. The young leaves are bright red or orange. As the leaves approach full size, the color fades to green on the upper surface with reddish accents at the edges and other areas where hairs are concentrated and yellow-green on the lower surface. The leaves are ovate with a cordate base and an elongated tip and have seven veins radiating from the base. The petioles are 4 to 9 cm long and the blades are 8 to 18 cm long and 7 to 12 cm broad. The 1.9-cm, white or pinkish flowers are grouped in terminal panicles. The purple berries that develop are about 12 mm in diameter. They are juicy and edible with a delightful flavor somewhat like blueberries. Each berry contains up to hundreds of tiny, light brown seeds (Liogier

1995, Little and Wadsworth 1964).

**Range.**—Camasey peludo is endemic to Puerto Rico (Liogier 1995). It grows mainly in the Luquillo Mountains, the Cordillera Central, and moist foothills in the eastern, northern, and western districts (Little and Wadsworth 1964).

**Ecology.**—Camasey peludo is common and widespread but never abundant. It is confined to disturbed, open areas, such as roadsides, landslides, recently abandoned fields, and large tree-fall gaps. Camasey peludo grows in areas receiving from about 1600 to over 3000 mm of annual precipitation on soils derived from igneous and sedimentary rocks. These upland soils are mostly highly weathered clays with slow internal drainage. The species grows from a few meters above sea level to nearly 1,000 m in elevation. Camasey peludo are occasionally attacked (sometimes lethally) by white flies (Aleyrodidae) and mealy bugs (Pseudococcidae, author's observation). *Cyrtopeltis modesta* Distant (Hemiptera), *Paurocephala heterotrichii* Caldwell (Homoptera), and *Bleparomastix ebulealis* Guenée (Lepidoptera) have also been observed attacking camasey peludo (Martorell 1975).

**Reproduction.**—Camasey peludo flowers and fruits nearly throughout the year (Little and Wadsworth 1964). A collection of fruits averaged  $1.298 \pm 0.046$  g/fruit and ranged from 0.650 to 1.998 g/fruit. Seeds separated from them averaged 98 million seeds/kg (air dry). Sown on moist filter paper, 85 percent germinated between 11 and 49 days after sowing. No data on nursery management of seedlings is available. Forty-four branches of camasey peludo were air layered by girdling and treating with 0.3 percent IBA in talcum, then covered with commercial potting mix and wrapped with aluminum foil. Eighty-nine percent rooted. However, IBA-treated cuttings placed in a mist bed entirely failed to root and grow. Natural layering is common.

**Growth and Management.**—Camasey peludo plants are relatively short-lived, lasting about 3 to

6 years. Resprouting and layering may enable them to persist somewhat longer. There is no reported planting or management experience for this species. Plants cloned by layering should be used for planting until methods of growing the plants from seed are developed. Natural reproduction in areas of abundant rainfall may be encouraged by cultivation or scalping to expose a bare seedbed during wet portions of the year.

**Benefits.**—Camasey peludo is an attractive roadside plant and should be encouraged whenever possible. Its beauty also suggests real potential as an ornamental, although its life is short and it has a tendency to unsightly decline in its last year. The fruit, currently almost unknown to the public, is very tasty and deserves attention. The fruits are a food source for birds. The light-brown, moderately hard wood has a specific gravity of 0.6 but is not used because of the poor form and small size of the plants (Little and Wadsworth 1964).

#### References

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John K. Francis, Research Forester, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, International Institute of Tropical Forestry, Jardín Botánico Sur, 1201 Calle Ceiba, San Juan PR 00926-1119, in cooperation with the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, PR 00936-4984