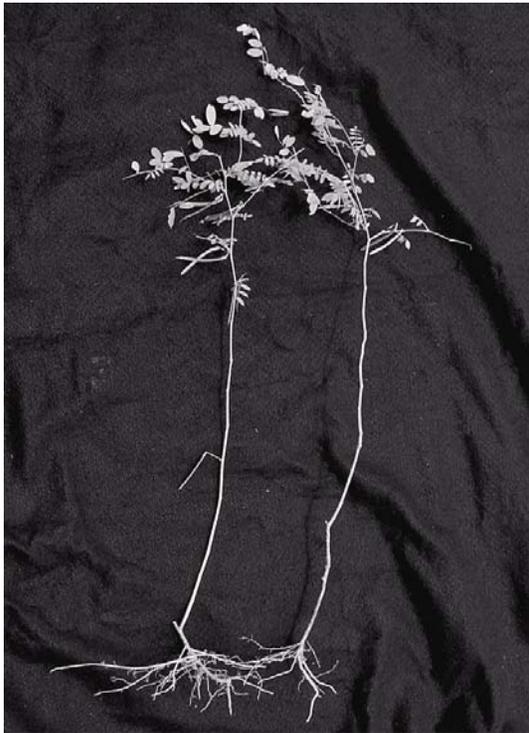


***Coursetia caribaea* (Jacq.) Lavin**
FABACEAE

añil falso

Synonyms: *Cracca caribaea* (Jacq.) Lavin
Galega caribaea Jacq.
Tephrosia caribaea (Jacq.) DC.
Benthamantha caribaea (Jacq.) Kuntze
Brittonamra caribaea (Jacq.) Kuntze
Tephrosia aniloides Bello



General Description.—Añil falso is a low shrub, usually about 0.6 m in height, but sometimes reaching 2 m in height and 1 cm or more in basal diameter. The common name is Spanish from Puerto Rico and means false indigo. Añil falso is supported by a tap and lateral root system with a moderate amount of fine roots. The species produces round to elongated root nodules (Dubey and others 1972). The plant has a slender single stem that usually resprouts with a single stem when the plant is damaged. Plants grazed by cattle may be stunted or contorted. The current year's mature growth is tender, but the stem is woody and normally without branches. The leaves are 4 to 12 cm long, have short petioles, and 9 to 18 opposite, elliptic leaflets, 0.6 to 3.0 cm long. The foliage is yellow-green. The racemes contain one to six pea-like flowers that are white or yellowish, sometimes

lined with pink or purple. The pods are linear, 4 to 6 cm long and somewhat compressed between seeds. The 10 to 25 seeds are about 2 mm long and have squared ends (Howard 1988, Liogier 1988). The diversity of the species across its range has resulted in the description of nine varieties (International Plant Index 2001).

Range.—Añil falso is native to northern Mexico through Central America and South America to Paraguay, and to Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Lesser Antilles, and Trinidad in the Caribbean (Liogier and Martorell 2000).

Ecology.—Añil falso grows at elevations from near sea level to over 400 m in Puerto Rico. These areas receive from about 750 mm to about 1200 mm of annual precipitation. The species grows in a wide variety of well-drained soils that originate from igneous and sedimentary (including limestone) rocks. Añil falso may be found in brush lands, secondary forests, and remnant forests. It is moderately intolerant of shade. While it normally grows in the understory, it requires plenty of filtered light. It can tolerate moderate competition from shrubs, herbs, and grass, but cannot survive in heavy grass swards. The leaves are shed during the dry season. In relatively undisturbed habitat in Puerto Rico, plants may grow as densely as one per m². Añil falso disappears from areas that are overgrazed.

Reproduction.—Of a collection made in Puerto Rico, air-dry pods of añil falso weighed an average of 0.073 ± 0.005 g/pod. Eighteen pods were threshed and yielded an average of 12.1 seeds/pod with a minimum of two and a maximum of 19. These seeds weighed an average of 0.0028 ± 0.0000 g/seed. They were sown without pretreatment on filter paper and yielded only 10 percent germination in 206 days. After mechanical scarification, 98 percent of the remainder of the

seeds germinated within 12 days. Grazing animals are the principal seed vectors. Seedlings are common and well-dispersed. Large plants are prolific seed producers. Even small and suppressed plants produce a few seeds.

Growth and Management.—Añil falso grows up to about 0.5 m per year in height. Plants live from 2 to several years. Wise management of the species must preclude all but light grazing. Plantations for range improvement or environmental restoration could probably be established by sowing scarified seed into cultivated understory sites before or at the beginning of the rainy season.

Benefits.—Añil falso, when available, is grazed heavily by cattle. The species improves the soil by fixing nitrogen.

References

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