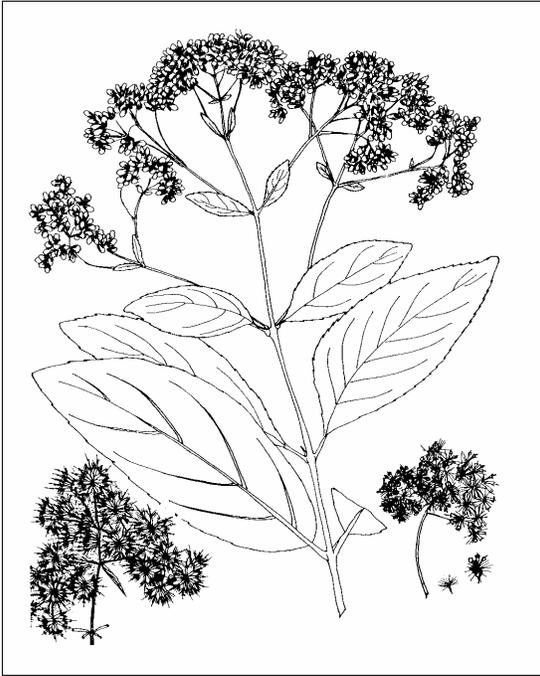


*Critonia portoricense* (Urban) Britt. & Wilson  
ASTERACEAE

guerrero

Synonyms: *Eupatorium portoricense* Urban



**General Description.**—Guerrero, which means warrior in Spanish, is a large shrub or small tree to 6 m in height and 15 cm in diameter at breast height. Older plants usually have multiple stems, arising from the root crown or lower stem. The wood is brittle and has a central pith 2 or 3 mm thick. Plants may or may not have well-defined taproots. Lateral roots are robust and send down sinker roots. The roots are tan-colored and stiff. Stem bark is thin, gray, and nearly smooth. The inner bark of guerrero is light green and bitter. Branches and twigs are not numerous, resulting in thin crowns. The hairless leaves are opposite, 7 to 16 cm long with short petioles, ovate-elliptical blades with serrated or wavy-toothed edges, and long-pointed tips. The foliage is fragrant. The inflorescences are heads within large, terminal corymbs with tiny white flowers that produce, at maturity, tiny (3 mm long) achenes tipped with 3-mm white hairs (pappus) (Liogier 1997, Little and others 1974).

**Range.**—Guerrero is found only in Puerto Rico and the adjacent island of Vieques (Liogier 1997, Little and others 1974). It is not known to have

been planted or naturalized elsewhere.

**Ecology.**—Guerrero grows on nearly all well-drained soil types derived from sedimentary and igneous rocks (including limestone and ultramafics). Rooting is deep when soil permits, but the typical sites where the species grows are shallow over bedrock. The species is also found on poor and eroded soils. It grows from near sea level to 900 m in elevation (Little and others 1974). Mean annual rainfall ranges from about 850 to 2200 mm. Although present in openings and rock outcrops in late secondary and remnant forests, guerrero is frequently common in early and middle secondary forests. It invades neglected pastures. Minor soil disturbance such as trampling by cows appears necessary for establishment.

**Reproduction.**—Guerrero mainly flowers from November to February and matures fruits from December to March (Little and others 1974). Plants receiving full or nearly full sun are heavy seed producers. The seeds are wind-dispersed and may travel considerable distances. A collection of seeds averaged 0.00025 g/seed or about 4,000,000 seeds/kg. Seedlings are rare to common, but never abundant. Resprouting occurs after adult plants are burned or cut.

**Growth and Management.**—Guerrero grows at a similar rate as associated species in the difficult habitat where it occurs. Sprouts add about 0.5 m of height per year for the first 4 or 5 years. Life span appears to be 2 to 3 decades. No planting experience has been published.

**Benefits.**—Guerrero is browsed by goats but mostly ignored by cattle. The species is sometimes planted as an ornamental for its fragrant foliage (Little and others 1974). Three pyrrolizidine alkaloids were isolated from the aerial parts of the shrub (Wiedenfeld and others 1995). As a medicinal plant, extracts from its leaves are said to relieve arthritis, and to relieve pain when applied as a topical alcoholic rub (Liogier 1990). Guerrero contributes to biodiversity of the forests in which it grows, furnishes cover and nesting sites for birds, and helps protect and stabilize soil in disturbed areas.

## References

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