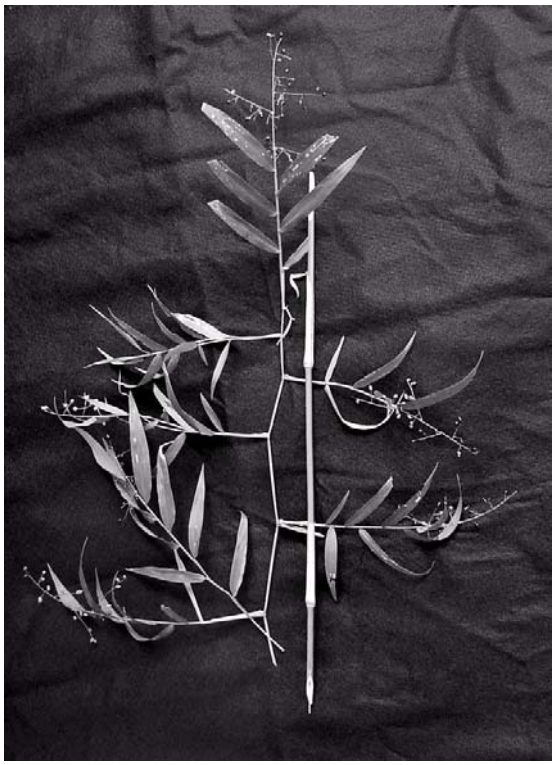
***Lasiacis divaricata* (L.) A.S. Hitchc.** wild bamboo
POACEAE

Synonyms: *Panicum bambusoides* Desv. ex Ham.
Panicum chauvinii Steud.
Lasiacis harrisii of Britton and Wilson
Lasiacis sloanei of Britton and Wilson
Panicum divericatum L. var. *glabrum* Kuntze
Panicum divericatum L. var. *stenostachyum* Griseb.



General Description.—Wild bamboo, also known as smallcane, pitillo de monte, tibisí, and chico, is an evergreen, slender, woody, climbing or scrambling shrub that sometimes reaches 5 m in length and is commonly about 6 mm in basal stem (culm) diameter. There are usually several stems from the root crown. The plant develops an extensive and abundant system of fibrous roots. The whole pant is more or less glabrous. The culms are hollow between nodes, thin-walled, brittle, and tough, so that they have low bending strength but high tensile strength. The lower internodes are greenish yellow and smooth. There are few or no branches on the culms until near the ends. Relatively few leaves are located on recently grown branches. The alternate leaves are narrowly lanceolate, 5 to 20 cm long and 5 to 15 cm wide. Inflorescences are terminal panicles with few branches. The fruits are ovoid, about 4 mm long, and covered (at maturity) with a thin, black pericarp (Hitchcock 1935, Nelson 1996, Stevens and others 2001). There are 2n = 36 chromosomes (CromoPar 2002).

Range.—Wild bamboo is native to southern Florida, the West Indies, and from Central Mexico to northern Argentina (Stevens and others 2001). Stevens and others (2001) report two varieties, *divaricata* and *leptostachya* (Hitchc.) Davidse, in Nicaragua. The species is not reported to have naturalized outside its native range.

Ecology.—Wild bamboo is intermediate in its tolerance to shade. It normally grows in the understory of medium to low-density forest, in small openings, and in brushy areas. It is common along shady forest trails and roads, and sometimes invades brushy pastures. In Puerto Rico, it grows from near sea level to about 800 m in elevation in areas that receive from about 1000 to 2400 mm of mean annual precipitation. Wild bamboo grows up to an elevation of 1300 m in Nicaragua (Stevens and others 2001). The species colonizes soils with the full gamut of textures and pH's from about 5.5 to 7.5 in areas of sedimentary (including limestone), igneous, and metamorphic (including ultramaphic) rocks. The soils are usually well drained.

Reproduction.—Wild bamboo flowers throughout the year except during periods of high drought stress. The flowers are assumed to be wind pollinated. Collections of air-dried seeds from two areas in Puerto Rico in different years yielded averages of 0.0064 $\pm$ 0.0001 and 0.0156 $\pm$ 0.0001 g/seed or roughly 90,000 seeds/kg. Some pretreatment is probably needed: one lot yielded 0 percent germination and the other 11 percent. The seeds are somewhat delicate and probably damaged by scarification. The pericarp can be

removed by rubbing with great care with unknown effect on germination. It is assumed that birds and possibly rodents are seed dispersers. Seedlings are not common. Culms layer (root) whenever they come in contact with the ground and are covered with litter. Wild bamboo sprouts when cut or damaged to renew damaged culms.

Growth and Management.—Growth of wild bamboo from sprouts is rapid. Sprouts from mature plants may reach most of their eventual length during the first year. Thereafter, branches are added for 1 or 2 years. After old culms die, new ones grow from the root crown. It is not known how fast seedlings grow. Wild cane seldom forms thickets and mostly grows in forests and brush lands so that control does not seem warranted. If it should be needed, grubbing out the root crowns or cutting and spot-spraying the resulting sprouts with glyphosate would probably be effective.

Benefits.—Wild bamboo furnishes food and cover for wildlife and helps protect the soil. The leafy and more succulent portions are browsed by horses and cattle. The species seems resistant to light and moderate browsing. The tough stems, which often run across low brush, make it difficult to walk through the forest.

References

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Hitchcok, A.S. 1935. Manual of the grasses of the United States. Miscellaneous Publication 200. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC. 1,040 p.

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Stevens, W.D., C. Ulloa-U., A. Pool, O.M. Montiel, eds. 2001. Flora de Nicaragua. Monographs in Systematic Botany Vol. 85, No. 3. Missouri Botanic Garden Press, St. Louis, MO. p. 1,911-2,666.

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