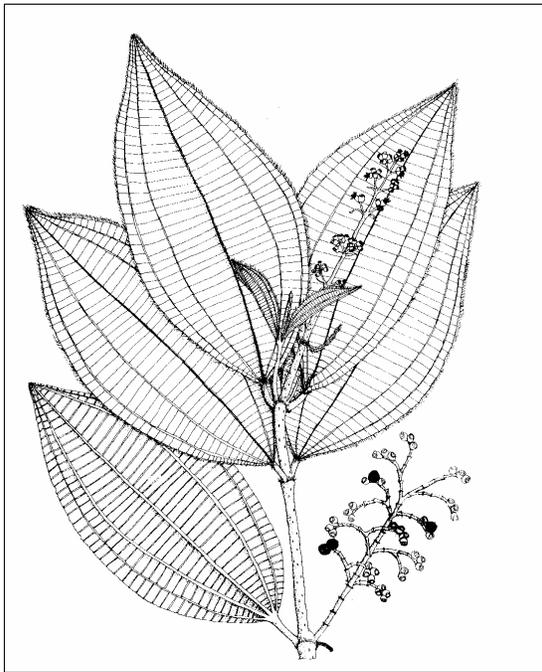


Miconia racemosa (Aubl.) DC.
MELASTOMATACEAE

camasey de felpa

Synonyms: *Melastoma racemosum* Aubl.
Melastoma decussatum Vahl
Miconia brachypoda DC.
Tamonea racemosa (Aubl.) Cook & Collins



General Description.—Camasey de felpa (meaning “felt” *Miconia* in Spanish), also known as terciopelo and camasey racimoso, is an evergreen shrub or small tree 2 or 3 m in height and 3 to 5 cm in stem diameter. The stems are smooth and gray with an inner bark of light gray. The plants are supported by an ample lateral root system. Multiple stems arising from the root crown and lower trunk are common. The wood is light brown and hard. Twigs are light green and somewhat four-angled and have a ring of hairs at the nodes. The opposite elliptic leaves have petioles 8 to 45 mm long, five main veins from the base, a saw-toothed, hairy edge, and are pointed at both ends. The inflorescences are panicles with many tiny white, pink, or purple flowers. The fruits are berries, 3 to 5 mm in diameter, whitish when immature, dark blue, purple, or black at maturity, and contain numerous tiny brown seeds (Howard 1989, Liogier 1995, Little and others

1974).

Range.—Camasey de felpa is native to Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Dominica, St. Lucia, Granada, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, the Guianas, and Brazil to the Atlantic forest in the South (Centro Nordestino de Informaçõas Sobre Plantas 2002, Fundação Andre Tosello 2002, Howard 1989, Liogier 1995, Little and others 1974).

Ecology.—Camasey de felpa inhabits areas that receive 1600 to 3000 mm of annual precipitation. Common habitat is on moderately well drained, somewhat poorly, and poorly drained, clayey, weathered soils, particularly ultisols. Areas of both sedimentary and igneous rocks are colonized at elevations from near sea level to 900 m in elevation. The species is shade intolerant, requiring partial sunlight to flower and fruit. Disturbance favors reproduction, but this requirement does not appear to be absolute. Seedlings are frequently found under plantations in mid-rotation or trees that have colonized old fields. Camasey de felpa may be found in old fields, tree plantations, secondary forests, roadsides, and landslides (author’s observation, Little and others 1974).

Reproduction.—Camasey de felpa flowers and fruits throughout the year (Little and others 1974). A collection of fruits from Puerto Rico weighed 0.1315 ± 0.0041 g/fruit. The seeds are tiny amounting to several million per kg. Placed on moist filter paper at ambient temperature, 33 percent germinated within 18 days. The seeds are principally dispersed by birds (Devoe 1989). A study in Puerto Rico showed predispersal losses of seeds to vertebrates and insects accounted for 3 percent of the seeds, fungi destroyed 9 percent, and postdispersal loss to ants was 15 percent (Myster 1997). Although seedlings are rarely abundant, the species is common at least in Puerto Rico, growing in small clumps or as scattered

individuals. Camasey de felpa coppices readily when cut.

Growth and Management.—Camasey de felpa has a moderate growth rate and probably lives 10 to 20 years. No management experience has been published. Natural reproduction could be encouraged by disturbance of moist and wet forest and unwanted plants eliminated by grubbing or spraying with broadleaf herbicides.

Benefits.—Camasey de felpa contributes to the aesthetics of forests where it grows, helps revegetate disturbed sites and protect the soil, and provides food and cover for birds and other wildlife. The fruits are juicy and edible but small and almost tasteless (Little and others 1974). The wood is useful for fuel, small fence posts, and stakes.

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