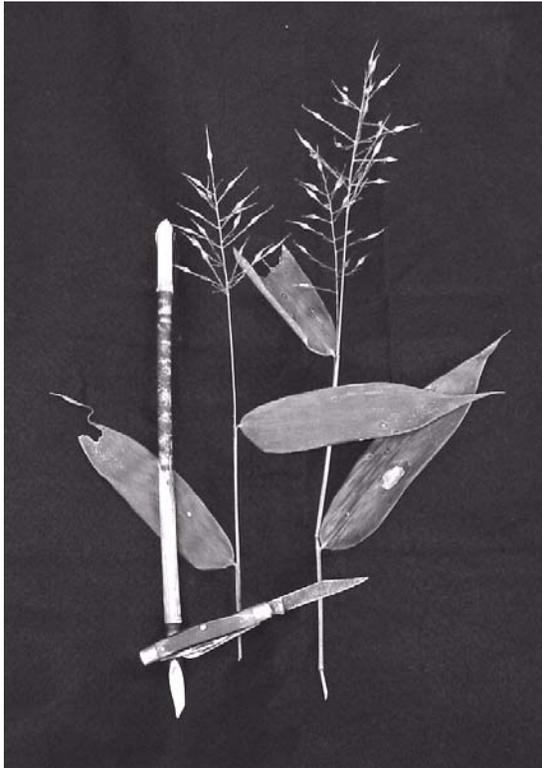


Olyra latifolia L.
POACEAE

carricillo

Synonym: *Olyra paniculata* Sw.
Olyra cordifolia Kunth.



General Description.—Carricillo (or carrucillo), also known as lintentwa, cortadora, lambedora, and sonadora, is a slender, arching bamboo-like grass. Unsupported culms reach about 1.5 m before sagging to horizontal. Climbing into the crowns of shrubs and low trees, plants may reach 3 to 7 m in height and sometimes as much laterally. The culms (stems) are thin-walled, brittle but tough, and can reach 1.5 cm in diameter. Each plant usually has several culms arising from a tight root crown composed of brief rhizomes that support abundant fine roots. The culms are green, sometimes mottled with purple, throughout their length and are enveloped with up to 8-cm sheaths arising from the nodes. The culms are lineal except for vertical sprouts on reclining stems and “brooms” or diffuse multiple branches that form near the ends of older culms. The leaves are ribbon-like, 15 to 25 cm long and 3 to 6 cm broad with long pointed tips and one edge of the leaf base rounded and the other straight, forming a 50 °

angle with respect to the leaf axis for about 2 cm. Inflorescences are panicles 10 to 15 cm long, terminal or upper axillary, and contain few to many flowers. The 5-mm fruits are smooth, shiny, ivory-colored, and hard (author’s observation, Croat 1978, Howard 1979, Stevens and others 2001).

Range.—Carricillo is native to southern Mexico, Central America, South America to northern Argentina, the Antilles, moist Tropical Africa, and Sri Lanka (Burkill 1994, Howard 1979, Judziewicz and others 1999). There is speculation that the species may be exotic in the Old World (Judziewicz and others 1999).

Ecology.—Carricillo is moderately intolerant to intermediate in tolerance to shade. It is widespread and relatively common in the understory of thin canopy forests, brushy forests, small openings, and edges of high forest. These are most often medium to late-secondary forests but can be primary forests and remnants. Carricillo grows on a wide variety of well-drained to somewhat poorly drained soils with pH’s from near neutral to about 5.5 over sedimentary (including limestone), igneous, and metamorphic (including ultramafic) rocks. Elevation may vary from near sea level to 1,100 m in areas that receive from about 1000 to more than 3000 mm of mean annual precipitation (author’s observation, Croat 1978, Shaka and others 1997, Stevens and others 2001).

Reproduction.—Carricillo flowers and fruits primarily during the rainy season in Panama (Croat 1978) and throughout the year in Nicaragua (Stevens and others 2001). Seed production is not abundant in Puerto Rico, but may be in Costa Rica (Missouri Botanical Garden 2002). Seeds in two collections made in Puerto Rico on the same site on different years averaged 0.0210 ± 0.0003 and 0.0225 ± 0.0003 g/seed or about 46,000 seeds/kg. Placed in moist potting mix, only 1 percent had germinated after 18 months. Scarification, alternate wetting and drying, and heat treatment all failed to stimulate germination (author’s observation). Birds disperse the seeds (Burkill

1994, Judziewicz and others 1999). New plants are uncommon. Attempts to cultivate the species in temperate greenhouses have failed (Judziewicz and others 1999).

Growth and Management.—Carricillo is a relatively fast growing plant. Individual culms grow 2 m or more during their first year and 1 m or so thereafter and live 2 to 4 years. By continual sprouting, plants may live for many years. Artificial vegetative propagation has not been explored. Until vegetative methods are developed or the extended dormancy problem of seeds is solved, planting is not advised. Eradication can be done by grubbing out individual plants or probably by cutting and spraying the sprouts with glyphosate or other grass herbicides.

Benefits.—Carricillo contributes to the diversity of the forest, helps protect the soil, and furnishes food and cover for wildlife. Cattle eat the leaves and fine twigs. Birds eat the fertile florets and fruits, although there is speculation that they may not be able to digest the hardened seeds (Burkill 1994). The species is the food plant for larva of the moth *Eryphanis reevesii* (Doubleday) (North Carolina Botanical Garden 2002). The hollow culms are used for flutes (Judziewicz and others 1999) and drinking straws. Leaves, culms, roots, and seeds are used in a number of applications in herbal medicine (Burkill 1994). Blades made from the culms are used by the Cuiba tribe in Colombia to cut the umbilical cords of newborns (Judziewicz and others 1999).

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