

Proustia vanillosma C. Wright
ASTERACEAE

sweet yellowcrown

Synonyms: *Proustia krugiana* Urban
Perezia vanillosma Molinet & Gómez



General Description.—Sweet yellowcrown, a name assigned by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (2003), is a clambering woody shrub reaching 1 to 3 m in height and 5 m of extension. The species usually has multiple stems that sometimes reach 2 cm in diameter. They are covered with a lightly striated, gray-brown bark and a green inner bark, and have a brittle, greenish-white wood with a 2-mm pith. The stems layer (root) whenever they come in contact with the soil. The roots are brown and flexible. Wood of branches is flexible, strong, and hard. The alternate, light-green leaves are thin to leathery with a rough surface, elliptic to narrowly ovate, pointed to rounded at the tips, have margins rough to dentate, and are up to 9 cm long. The fragrant inflorescences are leafy, terminal panicles of heads that have three to seven florets. The corolla is yellow, 8 to 10 mm long. The seeds have an 8-mm straw-colored pappus (Liogier 1997). Turner (1993) proposed a new genus, *Berylsimpsonia*, to replace *Proustia* in the Greater Antilles.

Range.—Sweet yellowcrown is native to Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, and Cuba (Liogier 1997). It is not known to have been planted or naturalized elsewhere.

Ecology.—The species occurs in dry and moist areas of Puerto Rico that receive from about 750 to 1800 mm of mean annual precipitation from a few

meters above sea level to elevations of about 550 m. Sweet yellowcrown grows on a wide variety of well-drained soils derived from sedimentary (including limestone), igneous, and metamorphic (including ultramaphic) rocks. It is moderately tolerant to shade, growing under open to moderately dense forest stands, as well as in openings and at forest edges. The species is most common in remnant primary stands and secondary forests that have never been completely converted to agriculture. Sweet yellowcrown slowly invades abandoned fields and pastures after they become forested. Although occasionally common and forming small thickets, plants are usually scattered (author's observations).

Reproduction.—Sweet yellowcrown in Puerto Rico flowers near the end of the wet season (November and December) and matures seed at the beginning of the dry season (January and February). A group of seeds collected in Puerto Rico averaged 0.000654 g/seed or 1,529 seeds/g. Sown on moist blotter paper, 88 percent of the seeds germinated within 13 days. Germination is epigeal. Seeds are dispersed by wind. Seedlings occur infrequently in forests. Once established, plants spread locally by layering (author's observations).

Growth and Management.—Sweet yellowcrown has a moderate growth rate (about 0.5 m of stem extension/year) and can live for at least a decade. Apparently plants (clones) survive longer than individual stems. No planting or natural stand management experience is published or known to the author.

Benefits.—Sweet yellowcrown helps protect the soil, furnishes cover for wildlife, and adds to the aesthetics of the forest.

References

- Liogier, H.A. 1997. Descriptive flora of Puerto Rico and adjacent islands. Vol. 5. Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR. 436 p.

Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2003. Plants profile: *Proustia vanillosma* C. Wright, sweet yellowcrown. http://plants.usda.gov/cgi_bin/plant_profile.cgi?symbol=PRVA. [not paged].

Turner, B.L. 1993. *Berylsimpsonia* (Compositae: Mutiseae), a new genus for the Greater Antilles. *Phytologia* 74: 349-355.

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