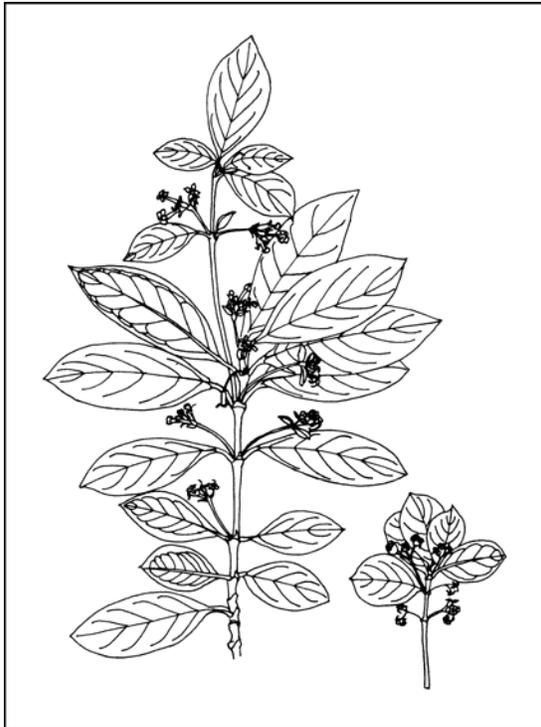


***Rondeletia inermis* (Spreng.) Krug & Urban**
RUBIACEAE

cordobancillo

Synonyms: *Catesbaea inermis* Spreng.
Rondeletia inermis angustifolia Krug & Urban
Rondeletia inermis oblongifolia Krug & Urban
Rondeletia inermis intermedia Krug & Urban
Rondeletia inermis latifolia Krug & Urban



General Description.—Cordobancillo is an upright evergreen shrub or occasionally a small tree sometimes reaching 4.5 m in height and 7.5 cm in stem diameter. The plant occasionally takes a vine-like form. Older plants usually have multiple stems arising at or near ground level. Stems and branches are slender, mostly straight. The bark is gray or dark brown and nearly smooth. Inner bark is green. The wood is hard or moderately hard and stiff; sapwood is yellowish and heartwood is light brown. Cordobancillo plants are supported by a tap and lateral root system of stiff, brown roots. Foliage is mostly grouped at the ends of twigs. The opposite leaves are variable: with or without hairs, cartaceous to coriaceous, linear to elliptic, and 1 to 10 cm long. There are deltoid stipules about 2 mm long and petioles 3 to 6 mm long. Groups of one to five small, yellow (or white to purple or brown)

flowers with four corolla lobes are borne on peduncles 0.5 to 3.0 cm long. The fruit is a two-celled, 3- to 4-mm, globose capsule containing tiny, wrinkled, brown seeds (author's observations, Liogier 1997, Little and others 1974).

Range.—Cordobancillo is endemic to Puerto Rico and its offshore island, Muertos (Little and others 1974). There are several races differing in size and shape of leaves and amount of pubescence (Liogier 1997). The species is not known to have been planted or naturalized elsewhere.

Ecology.—The species is intermediate in tolerance to shade. It usually grows in the understory of open to moderately dense forests, or in small openings or edges. Cordobancillo may be found in both primary remnants and secondary forests. It invades disturbed areas but takes many years to do so. Cordobancillo grows in a wide range of well-drained, neutral to mildly acidic soils derived from sedimentary (including limestone), igneous, and metamorphic (including ultramafic) rocks. It grows from a few meters above sea level to elevations of 1,000 m (Little and others 1974) in areas that receive from about 750 to 2500 mm of mean annual precipitation.

Reproduction.—Cordobancillo flowers and fruits throughout the year. A collection of air-dried seeds from the moist limestone hills near Bayamon, Puerto Rico averaged 1,863,000 seeds/kg. Seed dispersal is probably by gravity and wind. Collecting seeds is difficult because the capsules ripen, dry, and open a few at a time and immediately release their tiny seeds.

Growth and Management.—Cordobancillo appears to have a slow to moderate growth rate and be relatively long-lived. By sprouting from the base and root crown, plants live longer than individual stems. There is no published experience on plantation establishment or management of natural stands.

Benefits.—Cordobancillo helps protect the soil, furnishes cover for wildlife, and adds to the aesthetics of Puerto Rican forests. Too small for lumber or poles, the wood is occasionally used for fuel.

References

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

Little, E.L., Jr., R.O. Woodbury, and F.H. Wadsworth. 1974. Trees of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Vol. 2. Agriculture Handbook 449. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC. 1,024 p.

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