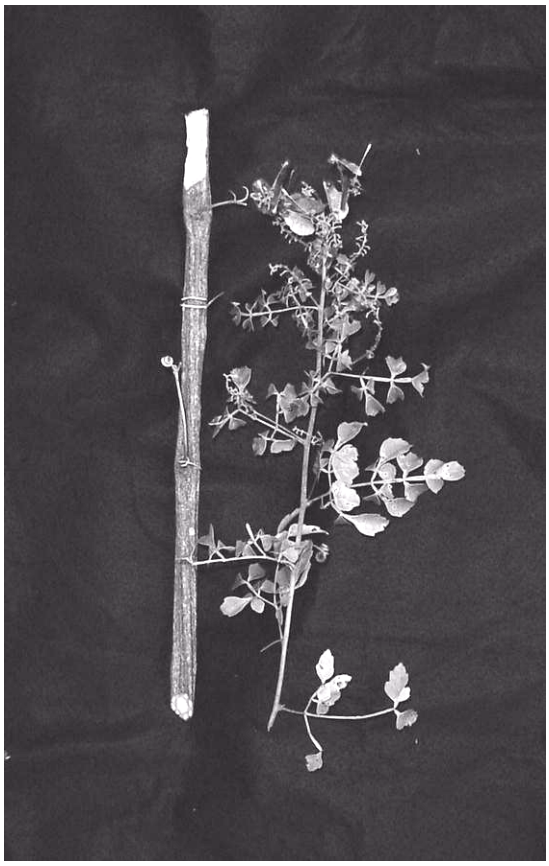
***Serjania polyphylla* (L.) Radlk.** bejuco de corrales
SAPINDACEAE

Synonyms: *Paullinia polyphylla* L.
Paullinia triternata Jacq.
Serjania lucida Schum.
Serjania triternata (Jacq.) Willd.
Serjania dubia Spreng.



General Description.—Bejuco de corrales, also known as bejuco de canastas, bejuco de costillas, basket wood, and blackwith, is a woody vine that ascends as much as 20 m into the crowns of trees. Bejuco de corrales is a Spanish name meaning corral vine. The older stems are brown, rough, with three main striations and up to 5 cm in diameter. The stem cross section has a characteristic pattern reminiscent of a string of beads around a central core. The vines have a taproot, extensive lateral, and abundant fine roots, and all have a dark brown color. Periodic sprouting from the root crown replaces dying stems and gives rise to multiple stems, usually less than five. The branches are slender and flexible with few bifurcations. Tendrils, which support the vine on trees and other structures, grow at the leaf axils. The alternate compound leaves divide by threes. Leaflets, which number three to 19 or more, are dentate from the middle to the tip, 1.5 to 6.0 cm long and 1.0 to 3.5 cm broad. Inflorescences are axillary panicles and contain many white flowers. The brown or red-brown fruits are samaras, 1.5 to 2.5 cm long, that grow in groups of three. Each samara contains a single seed (Acevedo-Rodrígues 1985, Liogier 1994).

Range.—Bejuco de corrales is native to Puerto Rico and offshore islands, the Virgin Islands, and Hispaniola (Liogier 1994). It is not known to have been planted elsewhere.

Ecology.—Bejuco de corrales grows in remnant and secondary forests, on roadsides, fence rows, river banks, and brushy pastures. It is usually common but rarely abundant. The species is moderately intolerant of shade, requiring full sunlight to flower and fruit; yet it can survive in the understory of low basal-area forest. Bejuco de corrales grows on soils with textures from sand to clay that are derived from igneous and sedimentary (including limestone) rocks. In Puerto Rico, the species grows from near sea level to over 600 m in elevation and in areas that receive from 750 to over 2000 mm of annual rainfall. In the areas with the highest rainfall, it is confined to excessively drained sites. Bejuco de corrales tolerates drought and at least mild salt spray. Frosts are not known within the native range.

Reproduction.—Bejuco de corrales flowers and fruits from November through June (Acevedo-Rodrígues 1985). An infrutescence may contain 25 or more fruits, and a plant may produce several infrutescences per year. A collection of bejuco de corrales samaras averaged 0.0248 g/fruit or 40,000 fruits/kg. When the clusters break up, the samaras spin and fly sideways as they descend and may travel a considerable distance before reaching the

ground.

Growth and Management.—Seedlings grow about 0.5 m in their first year. Older plants and sprouts grow 2 or 3 m each year. Individual stems can live for several years; by sprouting, plants may survive for at least several decades. No planting experience for the species has been reported. In the past, farmers controlled bejuco de corrales by repeated cutting with a machete. These vines could probably be killed faster by spraying the sprouts that arise after cutting with broadleaf weed killer.

Benefits.—The strong and flexible stems of bejuco de corrales are suitable for basketry, and some of the common names indicate that it was used for this purpose. Bejuco de corrales is considered to be a honey plant in the Dominican Republic (Marcano Fondeur 1973). Livestock eat young plants and the foliage of older ones that are within their reach. Bejuco de corrales is reputed to be a diuretic and purifier of the blood in herbal medicine (Liogier 1990).

References

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Marcano Fondeur, E. de J. 1973. La flora apícola de la República Dominicana. http://marcano.freeservers.com/nature/estudios/apicola/dicotsp.htm. 11 p.

John K. Francis, Research Forester, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, International Institute of Tropical Forestry, Jardín Botánico Sur, 1201 Calle Ceiba, San Juan PR 00926-1119, in cooperation with the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, PR 00936-4984