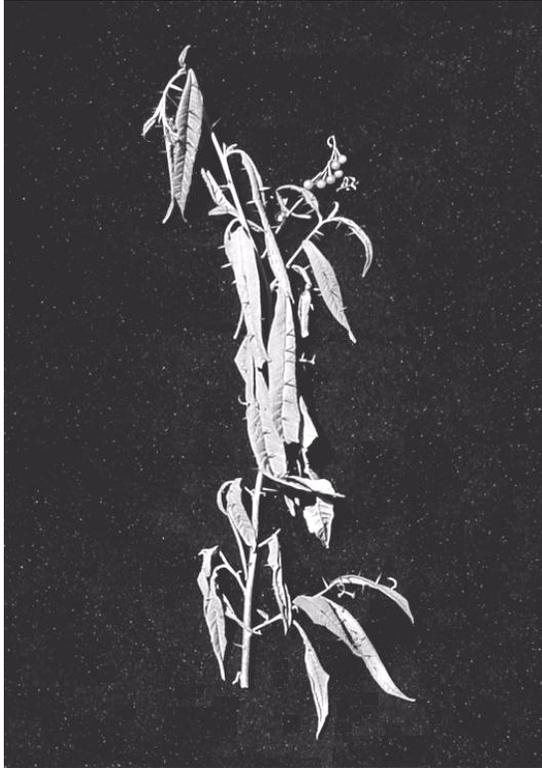


***Solanum persicifolium* Dunal**  
SOLANACEAE

berenjena de playa

Synonyms: *Solanum ignaeum parvifolium* Vahl  
*Solanum persicifolium angustifolium* Dunal in DC.  
*Solanum persicifolium belloni* O.E. Schulz in Urban  
*Solanum persicifolium parvifolium* (Vahl) O.E. Schulz



**General Description.**—Berenjena de playa, which means beach eggplant, is a semideciduous shrub usually about 2 m in height with a basal diameter of 1.5 cm. The species is also known as rubia. It may have a single or multiple stems and is supported by a stout taproot and many lateral roots. The most striking feature of the species is the sharp yellow to orange prickles on the stem, branches and midveins of the leaves. The prickles may reach as much as 13 mm long. However, the density of prickles is variable and some plants have none. The branches and twigs are slender and form a thin crown. The alternate leaves, which have 4- to 7-mm petioles, are thin, oblong to linear-oblong, 5 to 13.5 cm long and 0.6 to 3 cm wide with pointed ends and edges rolled under (revolute). The leaves take on a wilted appearance during dry periods. The raceme-like inflorescences

are lateral and contain up to 15 small, blue, violet, or rarely white flowers. The fruits are globose, red berries about 5 mm in diameter with the calyx still attached. Each contains several flattened, yellow seeds (author's observation, Liogier 1995).

**Range.**—Berenjena de playa is native to Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (Liogier 1995). It is not known to have been planted or naturalized elsewhere.

**Ecology.**—Berenjena de playa is most common near the sea shore but does occur several km inland. It grows on the whole range of soil textures on well-drained soils. In Puerto Rico, the species colonizes areas that receive from 750 mm to about 1700 mm of mean annual precipitation from near sea level to over 400 m of elevation. Berenjena de playa is moderately intolerant of shade and grows within low basal-area forest as well as in openings. The plants are apparently avoided by cattle and appear to benefit by overgrazing. Some degree of disturbance appears to be necessary for establishment. Vázquez and Kolterman (1998) report it as "occasional" in pasture, shrubland, and woodland. It may also be found on roadsides, trails, fencerows, bluffs, and beach strands.

**Reproduction.**—Berenjena de playa flowers and fruits more or less continuously in moist habitat but seasonally in dry habitat. A group of fruits collected in Puerto Rico averaged  $0.0708 \pm 0.0035$  g/fruit. They contained from three to 20 seeds each, which averaged (air-dried)  $0.00137 \pm 0.0003$  g/seed or 730,000 seeds/kg. The seeds are apparently dispersed by birds that eat the fruits. Plants sprout when they are broken or cut.

**Growth and Management.**—Sprouts of berenjena de playa grows about 0.5 to 1.0 m in the first year and slower thereafter. Seedling growth is undoubtedly slower. Stems apparently live about 3 to 10 years, but the rootstalks resprout and may be older than the top. No management experience has

been published. Small areas of disturbance in suitable habitat would probably encourage natural establishment. The species is rarely common enough to control as a weed in pastures or plantations.

**Benefits.**—Berenjena de playa contributes to the biodiversity of habitat where it grows, helps to protect the soil, and furnishes food and cover for wildlife, particularly birds.

### **References**

- Liogier, H.A. 1995. Descriptive flora of Puerto Rico and adjacent islands. Vol. 4. Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, PR. 617 p.
- Vázquez, O.J. and D.A. Kolterman. 1998. Floristic composition and vegetation types of the Punta Guaniquilla Natural Reserve—Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. *Caribbean Journal of Science* 34(3-4): 265-279.

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