

***Tetrapterys inaequalis* Cav.**
MALPIGHIACEAE

bejuco de paralejo

Synonyms: *Tetrapteris citrifolia* (Sw.) Pers.
Banisteria bracteata DC.
Triopteris citrifolia Sw.
Tetrapteris paniculata Bello



General Description.—Bejuco de paralejo, also known as brjuco de sopla and aile à ravet, is a woody vine or climbing shrub that may extend 15 m laterally and reach 10 m into the crowns of trees, with stems as thick as 8 cm. The root system is superficial, especially roots arising from layered stems. The stems are cylindrical, smooth, and have rings at the nodes. The wood is moderately hard and has growth rings. The stems tend to be long and little branched except near the extremities. The simple, opposite ovate or elliptical leaves have petioles 1 to 1.5 cm long, and blades 5 to 17 cm long and 5 to 8 cm broad, rounded to cordate at the base and pointed at the tip. Inflorescences are panicles of four-flowered cymes flanked by leaves of reduced size that often shrivel as the fruits mature. The five-merous, yellow-petaled flowers are about 2 cm in diameter. The fruits consist of four samaras united at the base. Each has an upper lateral wing 17 to 28 mm by 6 to 10 mm and a lower lateral wing about half as large and a medial ridge protruding about 1 mm (Acevedo-Rodríguez 1985, Howard 1988, Liogier 1988).

Range.—The range of bejuco de paralejo includes Puerto Rico and the offshore island of Vieques, St. Thomas, and St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and St. Vincent (Howard 1988). This differs from Liogier (1988) and Acevedo-Rodríguez (1985) who use the

synonym *T. citrifolia* and add Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Tobago to the range. Howard states: “The flowering specimen from Tobago that Niedenzu called *T. citrifolia* is almost certainly *T. discolor* (G. Meyer) DC. ...Niedenzu considered [*T. inaequalis*] a synonym of *Tetrapterys citrifolia* (Sw.) Pers. They are certainly closely related, both belonging to the difficult group called Section *Lophogynixa* by Niedenzu. However, *T. citrifolia* from Jamaica, the type locality, has a well-developed dorsal wing on the samara and young stems that are tightly sericeous with straight appressed hairs. These differences lead me to consider *T. citrifolia* endemic to Jamaica and apply the later name *T. inaequalis* to the plant of Puerto Rico and the Lesser Antilles. ...The species of the Lesser Antilles seems not to occur on Hispaniola...” In their latest checklist, Liogier and Martorell (2000) now concur with Howard.

Ecology.—Bejuco de paralejo colonizes a wide range of soils derived from both sedimentary and igneous rocks. It requires mean annual rainfall of from about 1200 to about 2500 mm. The species grows at elevations between 110 and 500 m in the Lesser Antilles (Howard 1988) and from a few meters above sea level to 600 m or more in Puerto Rico. Bejuco de paralejo does not tolerate shade well. It will survive and grow slowly in light shade but requires full or nearly full sunlight to flower and fruit. The species may be found on roadsides, along rivers, in brushy pastures, early secondary forests, and clearings in secondary and remnant forests.

Reproduction.—Bejuco de paralejo usually flowers in Puerto Rico in October and November and fruits in July to October (Acevedo-Rodríguez 1985). Howard (1988) notes collections in the Lesser Antilles with flowers and fruits in every month except May and June. Hundreds of seeds can be produced by a large plant. Air-dried samaras from Puerto Rico collected by the author in April averaged 0.0953 ± 0.0014 g/fruit. Planted on commercial potting mix without any

pretreatment, 79 percent germinated between 34 and 82 days after sowing. Samaras spiral sideways a few meters from fruiting adult plants. While young plants are relatively common in many areas; fruiting plants are relatively rare. Layering (rooting in contact with the ground) is common and appears to be an important means of perpetuating established plants.

Growth and Management.—Bejuco de paralejo vines extend rapidly from sprouts. A large vine (7.7 cm in diameter) cut by the author had 27 growth rings. Although large plants are capable of smothering small trees, the species causes few problems. No planting or management experience has been published.

Benefits.—Bejuco de paralejo contributes to the biodiversity of forests, helps protect the soil, and furnishes cover for wildlife.

References

- Acevedo-Rodríguez, P. 1985. Los bejuocos de Puerto Rico. Vol. 1. General Technical Report SO-58. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Forest Experiment Station, New Orleans, LA. 331 p.
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