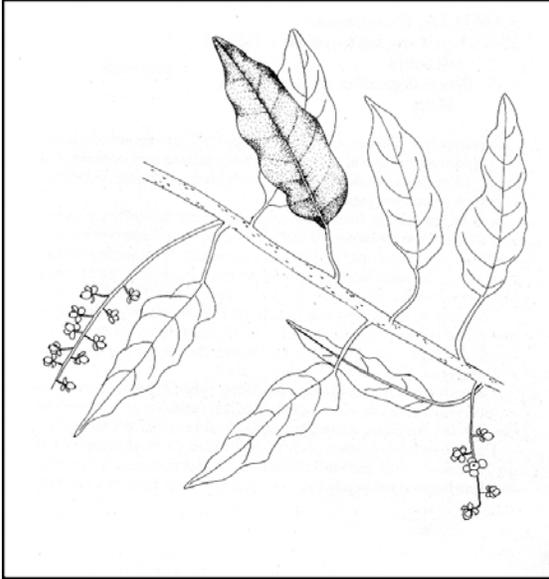


***Trichostigma octandrum* (L.) H. Walt.**
PHYTOLACCACEAE

hoop vine

Synonyms: *Rivinia octandra* L.
Rivinia humilis var. *scandens* L.
Rivinia scandens (L.) Miller
Trichostigma rivinoides A. Rich. in Sagra
Villamilla octandra (L.) Hook. f. in Benth. & Hook.



General Description.—Hoop vine, which is also known as basket wiss, bejuco de paloma, bejuco de nasa, bejuco de palma, murette, liane à barriques, and liane à terre, is a scrambling shrub that may extend 10 m laterally or 6 m up into the crowns of trees and develops stems with diameters of 5 to 15 cm. These plants produce weak taproots, extensive lateral roots and many fine roots. The stems are gray, cylindrical, smooth, and relatively stiff. Older plants often have several branches near the base and then few branches until near the growing tips. Young branches of hoop vine are cylindrical, slender, and covered with elongated lenticels. The leaves are alternate, elliptic to lanceolate, 5 to 15 cm long and 1.5 to 6 cm broad. The petioles and young leaves are reddish. The inflorescence is a many-flowered raceme about 15 cm long, often terminal on a leafless stem. The flowers are about 10 mm across, greenish-white, becoming red as the fruits develop. Hoop vine fruits are elliptic, about 5 to 6 mm in diameter, and purple to black when fully ripe. They have little flavor but leave a slightly unpleasant aftertaste. The seeds are 4 to 5 mm in diameter, black, and

shiny (Acevedo-Rodríguez 1985, Howard 1988, Liogier 1985).

Range.—Hoop vine is native to southern Florida, throughout the West Indies, and from Mexico to northern Argentina (Anonymous 2002, Howard 1988, Liogier 1985). Although relatively common in most other areas, the species is listed as critically endangered in Florida (Gann and others 2001).

Ecology.—Although hoop vine has no specialized climbing structures, it often ascends into the lower and mid-crowns of trees. The shrub also covers windfalls, fences, rocks, and forms mounds of tangled stems to 2 m high in open areas. Hoop vine grows on soils of all textures in a wide range of pH's derived from both igneous, metamorphic (including ultramafics) and sedimentary (including limestone) rocks. In Puerto Rico, the species occurs in areas receiving from 900 mm to 2400 mm of precipitation. In Costa Rica, herbarium specimens have been collected from near sea level to 1,100 m in elevation (Anonymous 2002). Hoop vine is moderately intolerant of shade. It invades early successional forest and continues at least into the late secondary forest stage, and also occurs in remnant forests, especially in tree-fall gaps and on the edges of natural openings. In farms and urban areas, the species grows on roadsides, fencerows, woodlots, brushy pastures, brushy vacant lots, and stream bottom galleries.

Reproduction.—In Puerto Rico, hoop vine plants flower from April to August and again in October (Acevedo-Rodríguez 1985). In Costa Rica, herbarium specimens were collected with fruit and flowers from November through June (Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad 2002). Fruits collected in Puerto Rico weighed an average of 0.178 ± 0.007 g/fruit. Air-dried seeds separated from them averaged 0.0324 ± 0.0004 g/seed or 31,000 seeds/kg. Sown in commercial potting mix, 32 percent of these seeds germinated between 10 and

71 days after sowing. Birds apparently disperse the seeds. Natural seedlings are not common. Stems layer (root) whenever they are covered with soil or organic material.

Growth and Management.—Growth of hoop vine is rapid from sprouts, as much as 3 m/year. Established plants appear to live for several decades, about as long as the trees they use for support. No management experience has been published.

Benefits.—The young leaves of hoop vine are cooked and eaten as a vegetable after the cooking water is discarded to remove the bitter flavor (Educational Concerns for Hunger 2002). Both the split stems and the bast fibers of hoop vine are used for making baskets. The stems are also used for making bent furniture and craft items (Ruiz 2002). Juice from the fruits leaves a purple stain on whatever it contacts and may have potential as a natural stain for cloth and crafts. The species contributes to biodiversity and soil stability, and provides food and cover for wildlife. In herbal medicine, the vegetative parts are used as a treatment for heart palpitations, and a powder of the root bark is applied topically to treat colds and water retention (Liogier 1990).

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