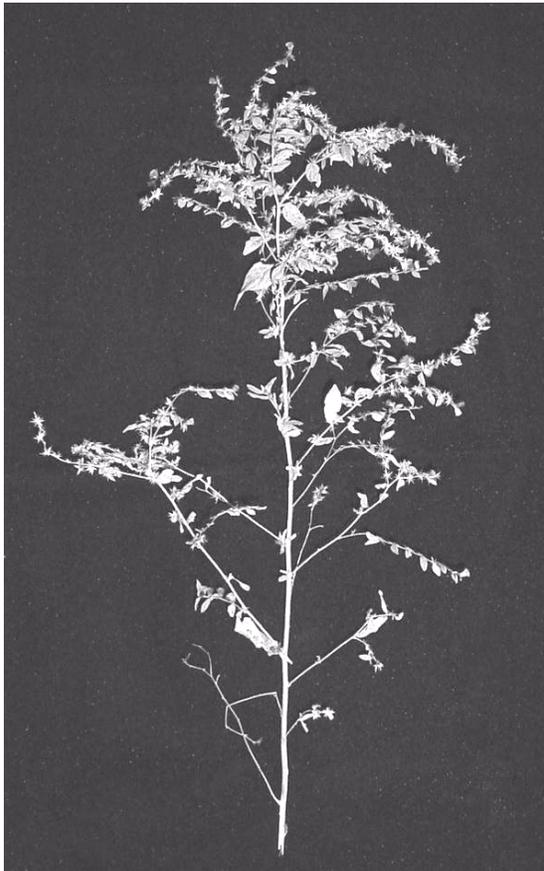


Vernonia sericea L.C. Rich.
ASTERACEAE

long-shoot

Synonyms: *Lepidaploa phyllostachya* Cass.
Vernonia berteriana DC.
Conya portoricensis Bert. ex DC.
Vernonia arborescens lessingiana Griseb.
Cacalia sericea (L.C. Rich.) Kuntze
Cacalia arborescens lessingiana (Griseb.) Kuntze



General Description.—Long-shoot, also known as escobilla, huye-que-te-coge, tapa caminos, and yerba socialista, is an upright shrub usually 1 to 1.5 m (occasionally 2 m) in height and 1 cm in basal stem diameter. It usually has a single main stem, although older and previously damaged plants sometimes have multiple stems branching from the root collar or from near the base. The wood of the stems is stiff and hard. The plant is supported by a tap and lateral root system of stiff, orange to tan roots. Smaller roots are tough and flexible. Branches and twigs are slender. The leaves are linear to elliptic, 2.5 to 10 cm long, with

an entire edge, and pointed at the tip and somewhat rounded at the base. The inflorescences are elongated scorpioid cymes with leafy bracts and contain lavender to white, sessile flower heads about 6 mm long with 11 to 18 florets. They produce achenes 2 mm long tipped with a brown pappus about 4 mm long (author's observation, Liogier 1997).

Range.—Long-shoot is native to Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (Liogier 1997). It is not known to have been planted or naturalized elsewhere.

Ecology.—Long-shoot grows on a variety of soil types, mostly of medium to heavy texture with pH's from 5 to 7 that are derived from sedimentary (including limestone), igneous, and metamorphic parent materials. These are well drained to somewhat poorly drained soils in areas that receive from about 850 to 2200 mm of mean annual precipitation at elevations from near sea level to about 700 m. Long-shoot is moderately intolerant of shade and grows in openings and under the canopy of low basal-area forest. It competes well with forbs and grasses if the vegetation is not too heavy. It is browsed by cattle, but not preferentially, so that it can survive and reproduce in lightly and moderately grazed pastures and range. Long-shoot grows on abandoned agricultural land, secondary forest, stream banks, open remnant forests, roadsides, and fence rows.

Reproduction.—Long-shoot blooms seasonally, probably at the latter part of the rainy season (November through January). The abundant seeds produced are dispersed by wind during the dry season (March and April). A collection of seeds from Puerto Rico weighed an average of 0.000309 g/seed or 3.2 million seeds/kg. Placed on moist filter paper, 69 percent germinated over the course of 2 months, beginning 7 days after sowing.

Growth and Management.—Long-shoot grows between 0.5 and 1 m in the first year from sprouts. The growth rate of seedlings is undoubtedly much slower. Individual stems live about 3 years, but plants sprout and live through a second, perhaps several, cycles of tops. No propagation or management experience has been published. Presumably, conditions for healthy populations can be created by maintaining broken or low basal-area forest stands.

Benefits.—Long-shoot helps protect the soil, adds to the aesthetic beauty of forests, and furnishes cover for wildlife. The species is one of the nectar sources for the butterfly, *Eurema leuce antillarum* Hall (Torres Bauzá 1999).

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.

Torres Bauzá, J.A. 1999. Ciclo de vida de *Eurema leuce antillarum* Hall (Lepidoptera: Pieridae) en Puerto Rico. Caribbean Journal of Science 35(3-4): 195-200.

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