

***Wedelia reticulata* DC.**
ASTERACEAE

manzanilla de monte

Synonyms: *Seruneum reticulatum* (DC.) Kuntze
Stemmodontia reticulata (DC.) Cook & Collins



General Description.—Manzanilla de monte is an evergreen shrub to 1.5 m in height and 1.5 cm in basal diameter. Adult plants have few-to-many, slender, brown, brittle, woody stems arising from the root crown. The stems have a 1-mm pith and discernible annual rings. The root system is dominated by stiff and brittle, slender, dark tan-over-green, wide spreading laterals. Also, adventitious roots grow from the bases of branches. Branching is often bifurcate or trifurcate, sometimes forming a tangled structure in older plants. However, foliage tends to concentrate at the periphery of the crown. Leaves are opposite, narrowly oblong ovate to oblong lanceolate, short-pointed at the tip and rounded to subcordate at the base, 3 to 10.5 cm long, with a 0.5- to 1.0-cm petiole and fine serrate edges. The leaves are green to yellow-green. Compound flowers are terminal, solitary, or occasionally in two's or three's. The yellow involucre bracts ("petals") are 4 to 7 mm in length and numerous florets. The fruits are four-sided achenes 3 mm long (author's observations, Liogier 1997).

Range.—Manzanilla de monte is native to Puerto Rico and the island of Hispaniola (Liogier 1997). It is not known to have been planted or naturalized elsewhere.

Ecology.—Manzanilla de monte grows on soils of all textures, pH's from mildly acid to mildly alkaline, over parent materials of igneous, sedimentary (including limestone), and metamorphic (including ultramafic) rocks. Soils are usually rocky or shallow over bedrock. The species grows from near sea level to elevations of 600 m or more in Puerto Rico (Breckon 2001, Francis and others 1998). Annual rainfall ranges from about 900 to 2000 mm. Manzanilla de monte tolerates salt spray and mild salinity in the soil. It is drought tolerant. During drought, the leaves wilt but usually do not fall off. Manzanilla de monte is intolerant of shade. It is open-grown or grows in small openings in low forest. The species is hardy and competes well with grass and herbs of similar height. Well-established stands become clumps and thickets that tend to shade out plants under them.

Reproduction.—Manzanilla de monte blooms and fruits continually. Seed production can be abundant although unknown insects sometimes destroy most of the seeds. Other than short-distance transport by wind, gravity, and water, specific means of dispersal are unknown. Seedlings are relatively uncommon. Suckers at the edge of clumps are common, and plants occasionally layer.

Growth and Management.—Manzanilla de monte is slow growing in natural environments. Sprouts grow 10 to 30 cm/year. Individual stems persist about 4 to 10 years. Through continually suckering and layering, plants can last almost indefinitely.

Benefits.—Manzanilla de monte contributes to the aesthetics of natural areas where it grows, helps protect the soil, and furnishes cover and possibly food for wildlife. Although somewhat rough in

appearance during dry periods, it has pretty flowers and should make a fine ornamental for natural landscaping, especially in coastal areas and rocky terrain.

References

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