Coccoloba uvifera (L.) L.

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POLYGONACEAE (BUCKWHEAT FAMILY)

Polygonum uvifera L., *Guaiabara uvifera* House

Dreifi, dreifi di laman, druif, grape, papaturro, raisin bord-de-mer, raisin la mer, raisinier bord-de-mer seagrape, sea-side grape, una de playa, uva, uva caleta, uva de mar, uvero, zeedreifi, zeedruif (Little and Wadsworth 1964)

This species is common in the West Indies, the gulf of Mexico, Central America, and northern South America along beaches and strand locations; it is sometimes found on the Pacific coast planted as an ornamental.

Coccoloba uvifera is medium-growing and varies from being a prostrate shrub to being a small, somewhat tortuous tree 18 m in height and 30 to 60 cm d.b.h. in its best-growing sites. Sometimes the trunk is very short and branches near the soil with long, straight, and slender branches which support a wide but sparse crown.

This species naturally hybridizes with others in the genus (Liogier 1983). The results complicate the botany of the group.

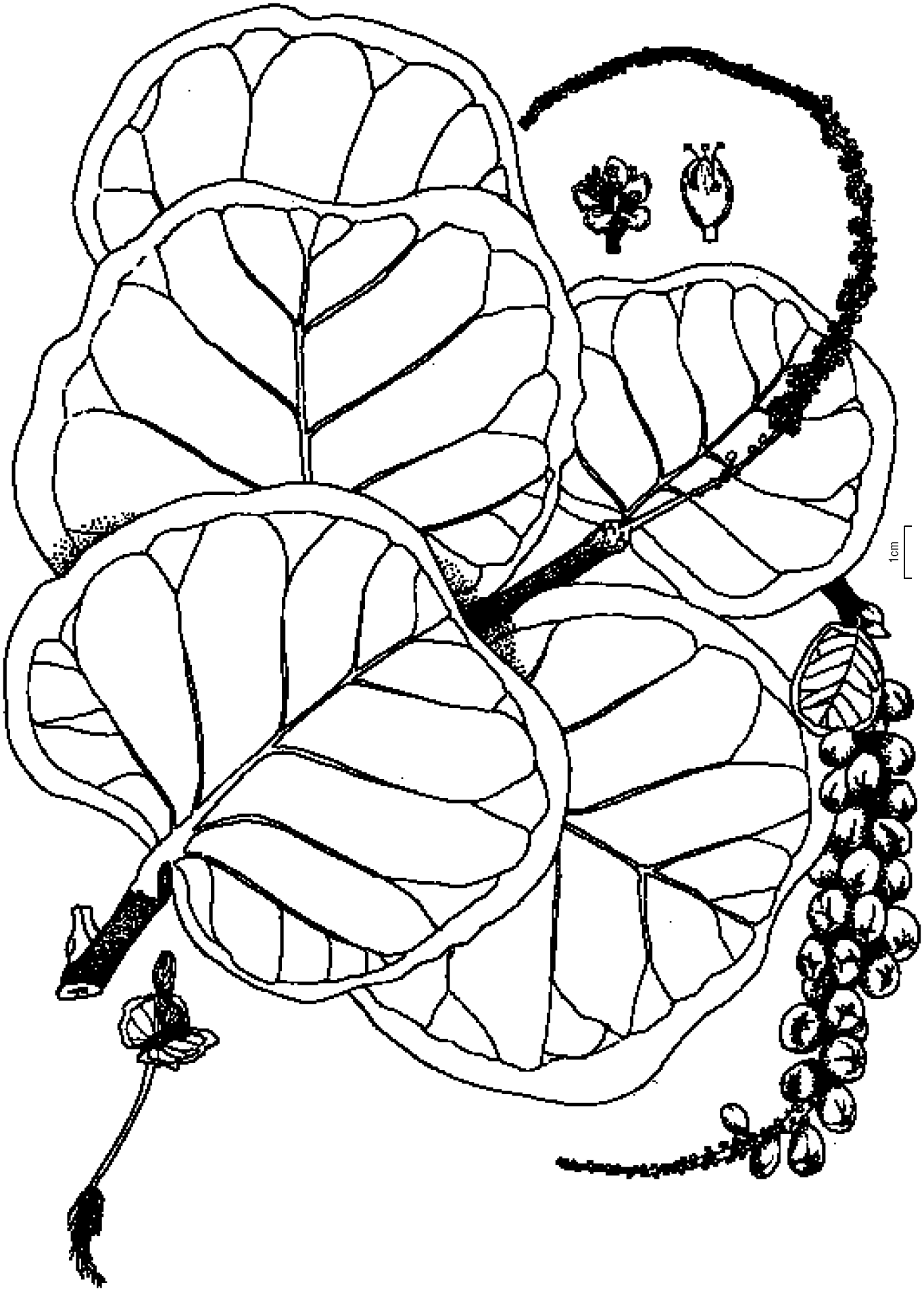
The sapwood of *C. uvifera* is light brown with heartwood somewhat darker and reddish. The wood can be worked and polished with ease, but the species' small size and susceptibility to dry wood termites limits its use to charcoal, posts, and poles. When properly preserved, the wood can be successfully used for furniture and cabinet work. The astringent roots and bark have been used as medicines. Jamaican or West Indian Kino was once combined with the astringent red sap of *C. uvifera*, extracted from superficial cuts, to use for tanning and dyeing. The thin, fleshy covering of the small fruits has a sweet and sour taste and is eaten raw or used for the preparation of jellies and a wine-like beverage.

Flowering and fruiting occur throughout the year but the best production of fruit occurs in March and April at the end of the short dry season. The fruits hang in clusters 15 to 25 cm long. The edible hypanthium is consumed by small animals or rots in the soil, leaving one elliptic seed or achene that is dark brown with a conspicuous pointed apex. A very accurate botanical description of this species appears in the Flora of Panama (Woodson and Schery 1980), which is quoted below under Additional Information.

Dry seed of *C. uvifera* collected from under an ornamental at a Panamanian Pacific beach resort averaged about 3,500 per kg. The seed was sowed without pretreatment in regular tin pans at ambient temperature in 50 percent shade. Germination began in 25 days when 16 percent of the seeds showed a 5 to 10 mm radicle anchoring in the humid soil. The observation period was too brief to provide conclusive data.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

"Tree of strand areas, 2 to 15 m tall; branches stout, papillose to pilose; ocreae rigid, coriaceous at the base, membranaceous at the apex, 3 to 8 mm long, papillose to pilose; leaves of normal shoots with stout petioles, 7 to 10 mm long, puberulent to pilose, the blades orbicular to reniform, 10x10, 11x14, 13x18, 20x27 cm long and broad, thick and minutely punctate on both surfaces, the apex rounded, truncate or emarginate, the base rounded to broadly cordate, one lobe extending around the petiole, the primary veins 3 to 5 pairs usually straight, bifurcate and weakly anastomosing near the margin, commonly barbate in the axils of the basal veins, the secondary venation minutely reticulate or obscure; inflorescence stout, 15 to 30 cm long, racemose, occasionally branched at the base, the rachis puberulent, staminate flowers in clusters of one to seven, the pistillate flower solitary at each locus, the bracts ovate, 1 to 15 mm long, 2 mm broad, puberulent, the ocreolac membranaceous 1 mm long puberulent, the flowering pedicels 1 to 2 mm long. the hypanthium 2 to 3 mm long, the perianth lobes 4 mm long, 3 to 4 mm wide, the fertile stamens to 4 mm long; fruiting pedicels 3 to 4 mm long, fruit obpyriform, 1.2 to 2 cm long 8 to 10 mm in diameter, narrowed at the base, rounded truncate at the apex, the perianth rose-purple when mature; achene black."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