Luehea seemannii Triana & Planch.

L.A. FOURNIER
Escuela de Biología, Universidad de Costa Rica

TILIACEAE (BASSWOOD FAMILY)

No synonyms

Caulote, cotonron, guácimo, guácimo colorado, guácimo de montaña, guácimo macho, guácimo molinero, guacimón, guacimón llayo, molinillo, tapasquit, yayo

One of the three species in the genus, *L. seemannii*, grows from Guatemala to Colombia.

Leuhea seemannii is a fast-growing forest tree often reaching more than 30 m in height and 2 m d.b.h. The trunk is often buttressed (up to 2 m in height), and the branches are tomentose. The trunk is irregularly channeled or intercrossed, and the yellow-red bark has a large number of lenticels. Leaves are alternate, stipulate, simple, rather thick-petiolate. The blade is oblong or oblong-elliptic, sometimes slightly oblong-obovate, rounded and asymmetric at the base, acuminate at the apex, margin serrated, 7 to 40 cm long and 3 to 16 cm wide. The upper surface is green and loosely arachnoid to glabrescent; the lower surface is brownish-arachnoid, palminerved, with the nervation more prominent beneath. Young plants in pastures and on cutover land are often little more than shrubs and have much larger juvenile leaves, which may be nearly 30 cm in length (Allen 1956). Large trees very often grow along gallery forests in humid and wet lowlands, but the species also grows in hilly areas up to 600 m. It grows in a wide range of soils and in climates with an annual rainfall from 2000 to 4000 mm and an annual average temperature of 23 to 25 °C.

The wood of *L. seemannii* is whitish, soft, light, and weak and is primarily used as firewood. The macerated young shoots secrete a dense, brown-reddish mucilageous substance in water. This substance is used in small sugarcane mills to agglomerate dirt and debris from boiling juice. The dirt and debris are gathered from the surface of the liquid and used as fertilizer or as pig feed.

Inflorescence of axillary or terminal thyrses, the white or yellowish flowers are 1 to 3 cm and usually appear in January and February (Allen 1956). The fruits usually mature in March and April. Fruit is a ligneus capsule, narrowly elliptic, contracted toward both ends, deeply five-sulcate with five prominent angles, 2 to 2.5 cm long, 1 cm in diameter, shortly brownish-tomentollous, and imperfectly loculicidally five-valvate. The seeds are numerous, small, oblong, about 2.5 to 3 mm long and 1 mm wide, with a wing. The wing is about 8 mm long and 3 mm wide, testa crustaceous, and expands into a large membranaceous wing. The embryo is straight and fleshy.

1cm
1cm
1cm