

False kava (492)

Summary

- Worldwide distribution (except Africa). In Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu.
- Major invasive shrub, suckering rapidly, forming dense thickets in native forests, along waterways, plantations, pastures, food gardens. Difficult to control: all parts regrow rapidly. Competes with kava and presence lowers commodity value. Host of CMV, causing kava dieback.
- Small shrub, 1-2m, sometimes tree-like to 6m. Leaves, oval, 30cm long, with one lobe larger. Leaf stalks surrounding stem and winged. Flowers, small, pale green in long arching spikes, up to 25cm, opposite leaves.
- Spread: birds, bats, rodents, water; trade in kava.
- Biosecurity: chance of introduction high in kava consignments.
- Biocontrol: none.
- Cultural control: hand-weeding removing all roots; or slash and collect all cuttings and burn. Clean machinery/vehicles.
- Chemical control: 2,4-D or imazapyr, applied to basal bark or cut stems.

Common Name

False kava. It is also known as *hoja santa* (Spanish for 'sacred leaf'), spiked pepper, root beer plant.

Scientific Name

Piper auritum. It is a member of the Piperaceae.



Photo 1. Large thicket, false kava, *Piper auritum*.



Photo 2. Small thicket, young false kava, *Piper auritum*.



Photo 3. Single stems, false kava, *Piper auritum*.



Photo 4. Prop roots, false kava, *Piper auritum*.



Photo 5. Leaves and flowers, false kava, *Piper auritum*.



Photo 6. Leaves of false kava, *Piper auritum*, showing their horizontal form, and the one-side nature of their lobes.



Photo 7. Leaves of false kava, *Piper auritum*, showing their horizontal form, and the one-side nature of their lobes.



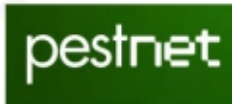
Photo 8. Leaves and flowers, false kava, *Piper auritum*.

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Information from CABI (2019) *Piper auritum*. Invasive Species Compendium. (<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/41359>); and Chaney A (2019) *Piper auritum*. Center for Latin American Studies, Vanderbilt University. (<https://as.vanderbilt.edu/cas/piper-auritum/>); and from *Piper auritum* Kunth, Piperaceae (2010) Pacific Islands Ecosystems at Risk (PIER). (http://www.hear.org/pier/species/piper_auritum.htm). Photo 1 Konrad Engelburger Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. Photos 5&6 Forest & Kim Starr (2002) *Piper auritum* (habit). Location: Maui, Nahiku.

Produced with support from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research under project HORT/2016/185: *Responding to emerging pest and disease threats to horticulture in the Pacific islands*, implemented by the University of Queensland and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

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