

Castilla elastica Sessé

Family:

Moraceae

Cervantes, V. (1794) *Gazeta de Literatura de Mexico Suppl.* 3: 7. Type: Mexico.

Common name:

Arbol del Hule; Castilloa Rubber; Caucho

Stem

Grows into a large tree. Bark exudate rapid and copious. Blaze odour resembles that of green beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*).

Leaves

Twigs, petioles and leaves produce a milky exudate. Leaf blades rather large, about 45 x 17 cm, petioles about 1-1.5 cm long. Stipules rather large, about 8 cm long, longitudinally veined and hairy on the outer surface. Upper surface of the leaf blades scabrous, lower surface hairy. Leaf blade margin appears to be toothed but closer inspection reveals that the 'teeth' are really tufts of hair. Lateral veins curving inside the blade margin but not forming definite loops.

Flowers

Flowers borne in flattened head-like clusters formed from numerous overlapping bracts. Male flowers: Flower clusters stalked, each cluster about 2-3 cm across. Stalks about 2.5-3 cm long. Female flowers: Flowers clusters almost sessile, about 2 cm across.

Fruit

Fruit is a flat disk of numerous green bracts with about 20-30 individual, orange-red, fleshy, 1-seeded fruits. Seeds about 8-10 x 6-8 mm.

Seedlings

First pair of leaves opposite, ovate to cordate, margins toothed, both the upper and lower surfaces clothed in prostrate hairs. At the tenth leaf stage: all plant parts produce a milky exudate. Marginal teeth are actually tufts of hairs on vein endings. Stipules with longitudinal parallel venation, outer surface hairy. Stipules sheathing the terminal bud. Stipular scars encircling the stem.

Distribution and Ecology

An introduced species originally from Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Ecuador, now naturalised in NEQ in the Cairns region. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 100 m. Grows in well developed but disturbed gallery forest, rain forest regrowth and on old farmland.

Natural History & Notes

This species was probably deliberately introduced to the Kamerunga Research Station. It was used at one time as a source of rubber before *Hevea brasiliensis* became the preferred source. *C. elastica* has become naturalised along the Barron River at Kamerunga and has spread into neighbouring areas.

RFK Code

1072



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, hypogeal germination. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO

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