Tabebuia impetiginosa

(Mart.) Standl.

white tabebuia, taheebo, ipe, lapacho

Bignoniaceae

LOCAL NAMES
English (pink trumpet tree,tabebuia white,purple tabebuia); Portuguese (piúva-roxa,piúva-preta,piúva,piúna-roxa,piúna,îpe-roxo); Spanish (lapacho); Trade name (white tabebuia,taheebo,ipe,lapacho)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION
Tabebuia impetiginosa is a small to medium deciduous tree 4.5-7.5 m tall or a huge canopy tree in the forest to 30 m tall and a diameter of 2-3 m with a fairly open canopy and sparse branching.

Leaves dark green, palmately compound, 5 leaflets with a serrate margin, 5-13 cm long, and 2.5-5 cm wide.

Flowers showy, trumpet-shaped, rose-pink to purple (occasionally white), with yellow orange throat, 7.5-10 cm long, up to 3.5 cm wide, appearing in dense, terminal panicles, containing up to 75 flowers, mostly in the spring just as new foliage emerges, but often also in the fall.

The brown, hairy, 15-30 cm long seed pods persist on the tree through the winter. They contain winged seeds.

The common name, pau d'arco, is Portuguese meaning bow wood. Natives made hunting bows from the dense resilient wood found in many of the Tabebuia species. The wood is still used for training weapons especially in the martial arts.

BIOLOGY
T. impetiginosa flowers in spring after light winter rains between December and February just before setting new leaves. In its native habitat, it blooms when few leaves are present probably to attract more pollinators. Carpenter bees are probably the primary pollinators, but some bird species could also be responsible.



Fruit; taken at: Los Angeles County Arboretum - Los Angeles, CA and Quail Botanical Gardens - Encinitas, CA (W. Mark and Reimer)



Flowers; taken at: Los Angeles County Arboretum - Los Angeles, CA and Quail Botanical Gardens - Encinitas, CA (W. Mark and Reimer)

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ECOLOGY
Warm tropical forests with full sun to partial shade and well-drained, dry soils. It can be found naturally growing in the Amazon rainforest and other forests in the tropical parts of South and Latin America and prefers sunny sites away from the beach.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS
Altitude: 0-1065 m
Mean annual temperature: 20-25°C (extremes of -4°C and 40°C)
Mean annual rainfall: 1600-1800 mm
Soil type: can grow on many soil types (clay, loam, sand, acidic, alkaline) as long as they are reasonably fertile, well-drained with moderate moisture.

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Surinam, United States of America, Venezuela

Exotic:



The map above shows countries where the species has been planted. It does neither suggest that the species can be planted in every ecological zone within that country, nor that the species can not be planted in other countries than those depicted. Since some tree species are invasive, you need to follow biosafety procedures that apply to your planting site.

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PRODUCTS
Timber: The tree is popular with timber loggers. Its high-quality wood is one of the heaviest, most durable in the tropics. It is widely used in the construction of almost everything from houses and boats to farm tools.

Medicine: Pau d'arco is considered astringent, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral and laxative; bark is used against cancer, diabetes and rheumatism. It is also recorded to be used by forest inhabitants throughout the Amazon against malaria, anaemia, colitis, ulcers, colds, cough, flu, fever, arthritis, dysentery, stomatitis, prostatitis, constipation, allergies, snakebite, boils and syphilis among numerous health conditions. It combines well with Echinacea purpurea, red clover (Trifolium pratense), or Korean or Chinese ginseng (Panax ginseng) to detoxify, resolve lymphatic congestion, and strengthen the immune system. Tea made from the inner bark in Central and South America is very popular and is used to treat a wide range of maladies.

SERVICES
Ornamental: T. impetiginosa is known for its attractive purple flowers and is often called “purple lapacho.”

Boundary or barrier: It is recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway, near deck or patio, narrow tree lawns , specimen, residential street tree.

TREE MANAGEMENT
The maintenance requirements of the species are minimal. Intermittent pruning to establish and maintain shape is necessary. Trees have a better form if trained to a single trunk and staked until they are 1.8-2.5 m tall, after which be allowed to grow naturally.

GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT
Information is scanty on germplasm management, but a study carried out to determine temperature requirements for seed germination and its control by gibberellins (GAs) in T. impetiginosa seeds in its nativity revealed that the ideal temperature under constant light to germinate the seeds is 30oC and that gibberellins are involved in the regulation of germination by controlling radicle elongation.

PESTS AND DISEASES
No pests or diseases are of major concern.

FURTHER READNG

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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