

LOCAL NAMES

Chamorro (amahatyan); English (native mulberry); Indonesian (lobiri, bedreg, ki beunteur)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Pipturus argenteus is a dioecious, evergreen, large shrub to small tree 5-10 m tall, trunk 8-40 cm in diameter; bark smooth, grey, lenticellate, inner bark soft, pale yellow to green.

Leaves alternate, ovate, 8-14 cm long, 1-6 cm wide, base acute, obtuse, and rounded to cordate, apex acuminate, coarsely serrated, palmately veined, green above and gray beneath, densely wooly beneath, petiole 2-8 cm long; twigs sparsely to densely hairy.

Flowers white, borne in spikes from leaf axils, 1-5 cm long, clustered at intervals, sub-sessile to sessile, cluster 3-7 mm in diameter.

Fruit, fleshy, small whitish, mulberry like up to 6 mm in diameter containing many small seeds.

BIOLOGY

Male and female flowers occur on separate plants; flowering from January-June and fruits ripe from May-July. The dispersal of *Pipturus* with fleshy composite fruits is enhanced by frugivorous birds.



Leaves and flowers taken at Private garden Brisbane QLD (Fagg, M. ANBG Photo No.: a.2684)



Underside of the leaves and flowers taken at Private garden Brisbane QLD (Fagg, M. ANBG Photo No.: a.2685)

ECOLOGY

P. argenteus is a subtropical species found in dry rainforest, riverine rainforest and common in disturbed habitats. It may be found in island beaches and in the limestone community from sea level up to 1250 m altitude. It is frequent on rocky cliffs near the sea, in coastal thickets and common to occasional in garden and fallow areas; an important pioneer species in abandoned gardens; occasional in home gardens; common in coconut plantation and *Pisonia* grove, and everywhere on atoll.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Altitude: 0-1250 m

Temperature: 23-27°C

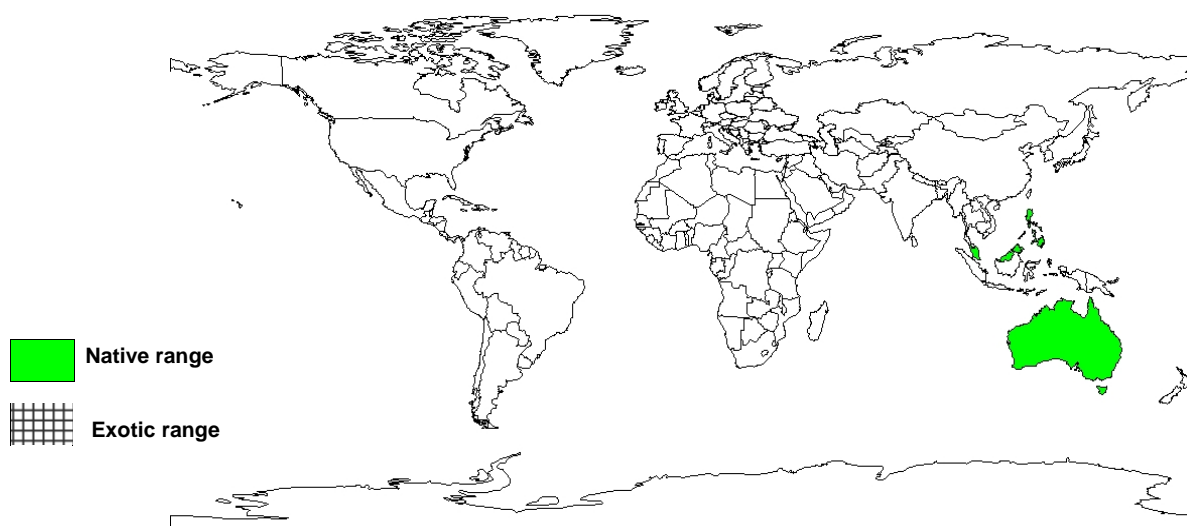
Rainfall: 1500-2000 mm

Soil type: prevalent in areas with soils of volcanic and limestone formations.

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Australia, Kiribati, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands

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.

PRODUCTS

Food: The fruit is edible though not particularly tasty. The cooked leaves are eaten as vegetable and the seeds eaten by pregnant women and newborn babies in Hawaii and by children in Tokelau.

Timber: The wood is used in house construction, for fishhooks, rollers for hauling and for making tape beaters in Hawaii.

Fuel: The wood is used as firewood

Medicine: The leaves are used for poulticing boils and herpes. Sap from the bark is taken as a gargle for thrush. Crushed leaves are used to treat cough and to relieve fever or headache, and is given to women in labour. The juice of heated leaves is used as a hygienic bath to cure fungus and other skin problems of children. In Aseki, the rainwater collected from the leaves is used to treat asthma; the bark is used to treat dysentery.

Fibre: The fibrous, tough bark is used to produce string, rope/cordage, fishing nets and lines, cloth and brooms; was also used to make ceremonial mats and for tying the navel of newborn babies. Other handicrafts can also be made from the bark fibre.

Tannin or dyestuff: A brown dye can be obtained from the bark.

Fodder: Armwe leaves provide feed for pigs.

SERVICES

Reclamation: Not particularly ornamental but a good fast growing screening plant. This is an excellent tree for rainforest restoration as it attracts many birds and insects.

Other services: Branches of this tree are also said to attract live cowries (marine invertebrates with attractive shells) when placed under a rock in the sea. Leaves are used in ceremonial dress and to parcel food and line earthen ovens in Melanesia; flowers are used to scent coconut oil in Lau. It is important in magic, sorcery, and rituals in Melanesia.

TREE MANAGEMENT

P. argenteus is a hardy plant, requiring regular watering only.

PESTS AND DISEASES

The plant is susceptible to brown root rot caused by the fungus, *Phellinus noxius* (Corner) Cunningham, on exposed roots and lower plant stems. At least two species of hawk moths have been noted to feed on the plant in Tutuila Islands and American Samoa.

FURTHER READING

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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