

Cassytha americana

Introduction

Cassytha americana (Nees) belongs to the parasitic genus of the family Lauraceae. It occurs apparently naturally on almost all tropical coasts and thrives on herbaceous and woody hosts in S.E Asia, USA- Hawaii, Florida and more recently in the Caribbean. According to Burkill *C. Americana* has a number of medicinal uses.

Identity

Authority	: Nees
Classification	
Kingdom	: Plantae
Phylum	: Magnolophyta
Class	: Magnolopsidae
Family	: Lauraceae
Genus	: <i>Cassytha</i>
Species	: <i>americana</i>
Synonyms	: <i>Cassytha filiformis</i> L., <i>Cassytha guineensis</i> Schum & Thonn.
Common Name	: Love vine, Devil's gut, Woe vine, Grass of lead (Portuguese), Seashore dodder
Role	: Pest

Morphology

C. americana is a perennial, herbaceous parasitic vine with spicy odor (Fig.1).

Leaves: Alternate and much reduced, membranous 1 mm long.

Stems: Climbing twiners, brownish greenish yellow in color and leafless, 2mm thick in tangled masses (Burkill, 1995).

Flowers: Inconspicuous petal-less greenish white flowers about 2mm long, berry like drupes, 5-7mm.

Fruit: Globose drupe 1-2in in diameter. and covered with a fleshy receptacle



Fig. 1 *Cassytha americana*

Biology & Ecology

Plant reproduces by seeds carried by birds. The plant is widely distributed in the tropics found on a variety of woody and herbaceous hosts in arid and semi-arid open thickets or by beaches (Adams, 1972). The plant attaches itself to host by suckers (Burkill, 1995).

Dispersal/Vectors

Dispersal methods are perhaps effected by the seeds being distributed by birds eating the fleshy fruits.

Management

Early infestations should be isolated and destroyed manually to ensure removal of the suckers. Care must be taken to avoid the vine from producing berries as birds may aid in its spread.

Pest Significance

It is reported as a parasite on plantation crops and other cultivated crops in some parts of the world. It is not known to harbour any harmful pests.

Host Notes

Stem parasite of woody and herbaceous plants

Distribution

S.E Asia, USA-Hawaii, Florida, Caribbean- Puerto Rico, Haiti, Africa, South America.

Bibliography

Adams, C.D. (1972). Flowering plants of Jamaica. University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica pg. 281.

Burkill, H.M. (1995). The useful plants of West tropical Africa. Vol 3 families J-L. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.