

Cordia subcordata Lam.

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BORAGINACEAE (BORAGE FAMILY)

No synonyms

Kou, sea trumpet (Corner 1988, Little and Skolmen 1989)

The genus *Cordia* contains about 250 species. They occur in tropical to warm temperate regions throughout the world, with the greatest diversity of species in the Neotropics (Wagner and others 1990). *Cordia subcordata* is apparently native to Malesia but has been spread throughout the Pacific and along Indian Ocean shores. The species can be found on seashores and adjacent lowlands from east Africa to Polynesia. *Cordia subcordata* closely resembles *C. sebestena* L., a better-known species frequently planted as an ornamental along tropical and subtropical coasts (Little and Skolmen 1989, Wagner and others 1990).

Cordia subcordata is a moderately fast-growing, small evergreen tree with a broad, dense crown. It grows to about 8 to 10 m in height and may attain 60 cm d.b.h. The species grows on soils ranging from coastal sands to clays, tolerates brackish water, and is drought tolerant. It generally occurs near sea level on dry to moderately wet (less than 2000 mm annual rainfall) sites. The tree readily produces shoots from its extensive, shallow root system and may form thickets (Wagner and others 1990).

The wood has a specific gravity of about 0.45 and often has a beautiful grain with wavy dark and light lines and bands (Little and Skolmen 1989, Neal 1965). It is soft, easily worked, and durable. Because the wood does not impart a flavor to foods, it is well-suited for cups, dishes, calabashes, and utensils. It is also used in handicrafts and small items of furniture. *Cordia subcordata* is often planted as an ornamental and shade tree. In Hawaii, where the tree was once more widespread, the flowers were commonly used for leis.

The showy flowers are in open cymes or panicles, with a pale green calyx and orange corolla. *Cordia subcordata* blooms throughout the year, but most heavily in the spring. Flowering

may begin within 3 to 5 years of age. The fruit is drupaceous, almost round, green when young, and brown and hard at maturity. The fruits (capsules) are approximately 2.5 cm long, and contain up to four white seeds, each about 10 to 13 mm long.

The fruits can be collected from the ground or picked directly from the trees by hand or with a pruning pole. Specific recommendations for storing *C. subcordata* seed are unavailable. Seeds of other *Cordia* species can retain some viability for up to 1 year when stored in airtight containers (Mandal and others 1985), but sowing fresh seed is recommended. Because the seeds are very difficult to extract without damage, whole capsules are generally sowed.

No pretreatment is required, but germination may be accelerated by clipping off a portion of the hard, dry capsule.

Capsules are sowed at a depth of approximately 1.5 to 2 cm. Germination begins in about 3 to 4 weeks; most seeds will germinate within 6 weeks, but some may take as long as 3 to 4 months (Mandal and others 1985). If more than one seedling germinates from a capsule, thinning may be necessary. When the capsule sufficiently decays, the seedlings should be carefully separated and potted individually.

Seedling growth during the first season is slow, with seedlings typically obtaining a height of about 10 to 15 cm. Seedlings can be outplanted at this height, or retained in the nursery for a second season after which they may reach 1.5 m in height (Hocking 1993, Mandal and others 1985, Singh 1982). Larger seedlings can be top-pruned or trimmed of lower branches before outplanting. Outplanted seedlings perform well in moderate shade. Seedlings may require supplemental watering on drought-prone sites, especially when planted in full sunlight (Mandal and others 1985).

