

Lafoensia speciosa (Kunth) DC.

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LYTHRACEAE (LOOSESTRIFE FAMILY)

Lafoensia acuminata

Guayacán amarillo, guayacán de manizales

Lafoensia speciosa is a tree that grows at a medium rate, reaching 15 m in height and 20 cm d.b.h. It has an oval crown and shiny green foliage. The leaves are 10 cm, red when they wither, opposite, with whole margins, short petioles, and a slightly marked nervation. The species grows at elevations between 1300 and 2900 m, with an average temperature of 12 to 24 °C and annual precipitation of 500 to 2000 mm. It demands fertile, well-drained, and wet soils. It grows in the life zones of the Tropical dry forest (bs-T), Pre-Mountainous wet forest (bh-PM), and Low Mountainous wet forest (bh-MB) (Rodriguez 1988).

Lafoensia speciosa is used primarily as an ornamental. It is also planted to protect hydric margins. The wood is used sparingly for posts and furniture and in general construction (Escobar and Rodriguez 1993).

The long-petaled flowers are white and grouped. The fruits are rounded, reddish capsules, 4 cm in diameter, with multiple winged seeds. The seeds have received little study.

After the seeds are soaked in water for 24 hours, they are planted in seedbeds at 2 cm deep and 5 cm apart in lines 10 cm apart. The plantules are transplanted when they reach 20 cm and require shade during early development (Trujillo 1984, Universidad Nacional de Colombia 1988).

When the plants are to be used as ornamentals, the ground must be cleared and the soil must be amended with fertilizer and mulch. When they are to be used as a hedge, the trees are planted 2 to 3 m apart. The site is cleaned and scarified to 15 cm. Poor sites should be fertilized. The tree does not survive frost when young; in dry seasons, the small trees defoliate. It is very demanding in urban zones and suffers attacks from *Acarus* mites, which suck the sap (Rodriguez 1988).

