



Chiute (*Cerbera dilatata*)

By Joseph Tuquero and Christine B. Laurent

Introduction

Chiute is a small- to medium-sized tree that is endemic to the Mariana Islands. In Guam, it can be found growing in savannah and ravine areas. It can be found in a wide range of habitats.

Names

Other Common Names: Atilas, chuti, native plumeria

Synonyms: Unknown

Family Name: Apocynaceae

Characteristics

Appearance

Chiute has plumeria-like flowers that are fragrant and attractive. The fruits, when still green, look like a small mango, and when mature, they turn from purple-maroon to brown. The fruits are smooth and shiny with tiny whitish spots. The seeds are poisonous.

Leaf

Shape: Lanceolate

Arrangement: Alternate

Type: Simple

Flower

Size: 2.0-2.8 in.

Color: White and pinkish in the center

Shape: Stellate, star-shaped with five petals and tubular corolla

Arrangement: Compound cyme

Flowering period: Year-round

Habit

Typical height: Average 8-25 ft. Can grow up to 30 ft.

Fruit

Type: Drupe

Size: Average 0.89 x 0.59 in.

Color: Green when immature and turns purple-maroon to brown when ripe

Number of seeds: 1

Edible: No, seeds are poisonous



Chiute flowers

Propagation

Form: Seed and cuttings

Seed collection: Collect seeds from healthy and mature fruits from either the tree or ground.

Seed treatment: Remove seed coat to hasten germination.

Germination time: 2 months

Planting depth: No deeper than twice the size of the seed.

Pre-planting: Seedlings from 1-gallon pots will be ready for transplant in 4-6 months after initial germination. Ensure shoot growth is at least 1 ft. above pot height and no taller than 2 ft., and ensure girth is at least 0.50 in. in diameter.

Special tips: Ensure adequate water. Fertilize as needed.

Production conditions

pH value: 6.0-7.2 (slightly acidic - neutral)

Water: Do not overwater, but media should be kept moist

Salt tolerance: Low

Wind tolerance: High

Soil characteristics: Well-drained soils

Light: Full sun, can tolerate shade

Space requirement: 8-15 ft.

Growth rate: 1-3 ft. per year

Growth direction: Upwards, crown spreading

Fertilizer: For outplants, apply small amounts of complete fertilizer once every 3-4 months for one year.



Chiute leaves



Chiute fruit

Pruning: Prune dead branches. Prune as necessary for structure and crown thinning. Prune no more than 25 percent of the plant every 4-6 months.

Risks

Near surface roots: None

Limb breakage: Medium

Special considerations: The milky sap from the tree and other plant parts may be poisonous.

Pests: Oleander hawk moth, wild pigs (rooting)

Uses for this plant

Chiute is recommended for reforestation of grasslands and urban forestry projects in the landscape and has other uses as well.

Agroforestry: Landscape and urban forestry projects; reforestation of grasslands

Wildlife: Food source

Medicinal:

- After childbirth, leaf decoction can be used for an aromatic bath
- Bark, leaves, and latex can be used as purgative
- Fruits, excluding seeds, can be used for rheumatism.

Other uses: Inner bark can be used as fiber. Seed oil can be used for lamp oil.



Chiute seed



Chiute seedlings

REFERENCES

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