



## *Piper aduncum*

### PEPPER FAMILY

Piperaceae

### COMMON NAMES

English: bamboo piper, false matico, jointwood, piper

### DESCRIPTION

Evergreen shrub or small tree (6–8 m tall), with short stilt roots, often in thickets, branches are erect, but with drooping twigs and swollen, purplish nodes, foliage and twigs aromatic.

**Bark:** Yellow-green, finely hairy stems and enlarged, ringed nodes.

**Leaves:** Green, softly hairy beneath, broadly sword- to oval-shaped (13–25 cm long and 3.5–8 cm wide), tapering into long tips with the base asymmetric, short leaf stalks.

**Flowers:** Yellowish, tiny, in long curving spikes opposite the leaves.

**Fruits:** Berries (fleshy fruits that don't open at maturity), green, small, egg-shaped, compressed into greyish, worm-like spikes.

### ORIGIN

Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, and the Caribbean.

### REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

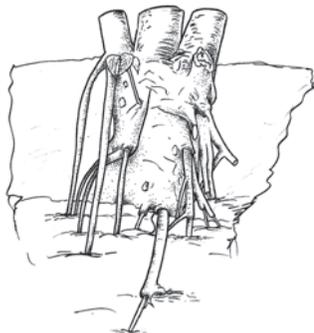
Medicine, spice and ornament.

### INVADES

Roadsides, disturbed land, fallow land, plantations, forest edges/gaps, lowlands and riparian zones.

### IMPACTS

*P. aduncum* establishes dense stands which shade out native species and prevent forest regeneration. In field surveys in Papua New Guinea, it was found to be present in all garden plots, 92% of riverine plots, 80% of young secondary and 65% of old secondary forest plots, and 75% of the gaps (Leps *et al.*, 2002). In regenerating areas, *P. aduncum* sometimes attained a canopy cover of 75% and suppressed the native species which local communities utilized extensively in the past (Leps *et al.*, 2002). In the Pacific, it is accidentally harvested with kava (*Piper methysticum* G. Forst), an important crop, lowering its quality. It also competes with kava and other crops and may act as a host for kava pests and pathogens (Plant Protection Service, 2001). It consumes large quantities of water, drying out the soil, and absorbs significant amounts of nutrients to the detriment of crops.



*Piper aduncum* L.



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