

Tabebuia donnell-smithii Rose

NADIA NAVARRETE-TINDALL and MARIO A. ORELLANA NÓÑEZ
USDA Forest Service, (Department of Biology, New Mexico State University)
Facultad de Agronomía, Universidad de El Salvador

BIGNONIACEAE (BIGNONIA FAMILY)

Cybistax donnell smithii (Rose) Seibert, *Cybistax millsii* Miranda, *Roseodendron dennell-smithii* (Rose) Miranda, *Roseodendron millsii* (Miranda) Miranda, *Tabebuia millsii* (Miranda)

Cacho de venado, comida de culebra, copal, cortex, cortex blanco, duranza, flor de zope, gold tree, palo blanco, primavera, white mahogany (Andrino and others 1991, Gentry 1992, Standley 1926, Witsberger and others 1982)

Tabebuia donnell-smithii is naturally distributed from Mexico to El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, and Venezuela (Gentry 1992). It has been planted as an ornamental in the Hawaiian islands (Carr 1998, Kuck and Tongg 1960). There are approximately 100 species in the genus *Tabebuia* (Gentry 1992). *Tabebuia chrysea* S.F. Blake or roble amarillo is endemic to the dry forests of northern California and northwestern Venezuela. *Tabebuia rosea* (Bertol.) DC., one of the national trees of El Salvador, is appreciated for its high-quality wood and beautiful flower display (Rojas 1993).

Tabebuia donnell-smithii is a tree with a straight trunk that reaches up to 35 in height (Standley 1926). This tree can be harvested for wood at 35 years (Andrino and others 1991). It is a deciduous tree with leaves from May through January. The leaves are palmately compound with five to seven leaflets. Leaves lack the stellate hairs present in other species of *Tabebuia*. According to Gentry (1992), this tree grows from sea level to 900 m. Andrino and others (1991) report that it grows from 800 to 2000 m and in areas with annual precipitation from 1500 to 4000 mm.

Known in the trade as white mahogany (Standley 1926), the fine wood of *T. donnell-smithii* has a medium texture. According to Gentry (1983), the wood is one of the hardest

and heaviest of the Neotropics. It is used worldwide for veneer, furniture, household utensils, flooring, and cabinet-work (Andrino and others 1991, Carr 1998). It is planted as an ornamental because the beautiful, striking yellow flowers bloom when the tree is free of leaves (Navarrete-Tindall 1997). Flowers last less than 1 week.

Tabebuia donnell-smithii flowers briefly in December and April and fruits in May and June (Witsberger and others 1982). The yellow, tubular flowers are produced in panicles; the fruits are cylindrical, elongated, and dehiscent capsules that contain many winged seeds that are dispersed by wind.

Fruits are collected before they open and dried before the seeds are extracted. Seeds are separated manually from the fruits.

Tabebuia donnell-smithii is propagated by seeds and cuttings. One or two seeds are planted in polyethylene bags containing soil with good drainage and watered regularly. Seeds germinate in 12 to 18 days and germination rate is 46 to 47 percent in El Salvador (Jara 1996). Seedlings can be outplanted in May or at the beginning of the rainy season, when they are 2.5 to 5 cm tall and have two or more true leaves. Cuttings 25 to 199 cm tall can be planted in polyethylene bags and watered regularly (Andrino and others 1991) or can be rooted directly in the field without the addition of growth regulators.