Cestrum laevigatum

Family: Solanaceae

Species: *Cestrum laevigatum* Schltdl. (NGRP, 2002)

Common Names: inkberry (bush), poison berry, and inkbessie (South Africa)

Synonyms:
Cestrum axillare Vell.
Cestrum foetidissimum Dunal
Cestrum multiflorum Schott. ex Sendtn.
Cestrum pendulinum Hort. Monsp. ex Dunal
Cestrum undulatum var. otites *Dunal*

Bayer Code: None provided

Description: An evergreen tree up to 15 m high. Leaves on long petioles, elliptic, entire, slightly asymmetrical at the base, glabrous or sparsely hairy, up to 15 cm long x 5 cm wide. Flowers greenish-yellow, sessile in axillary clusters. Flowers yellowish white, corolla tube 10–25 mm long, contracted below the ovary, with five equal spreading lobes 5 mm long. Calyx tubular about 5 mm long with five short lobes. Fruit a fleshy capsule, oval 10–15 mm long turning purple-black when ripe. Seeds oblong 4–6 mm long, 3 mm thick, rounded on the back, finely wrinkled, concave on the ventral side with a prominent scar.

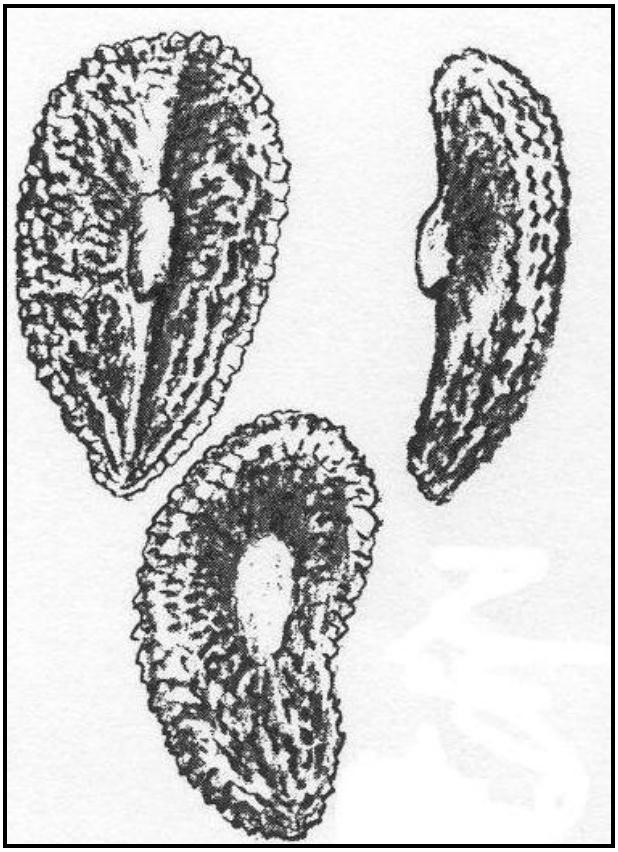

Figure 1. ***Cestrum laevigatum*** **seeds from Reed (1977)**

Figure 2. ***Cestrum laevigatum*** **flowering plant from Henderson (2001)**

Figure 3. ***Cestrum laevigatum*** **drawing by Goeff Nichols from Henderson (2001)**

Distribution: Native in the Americas (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru). Naturalized in South Africa and Swaziland (NGRP, 2002; Henderson, 2001; Reed, 1977; Wells et al., 1986).

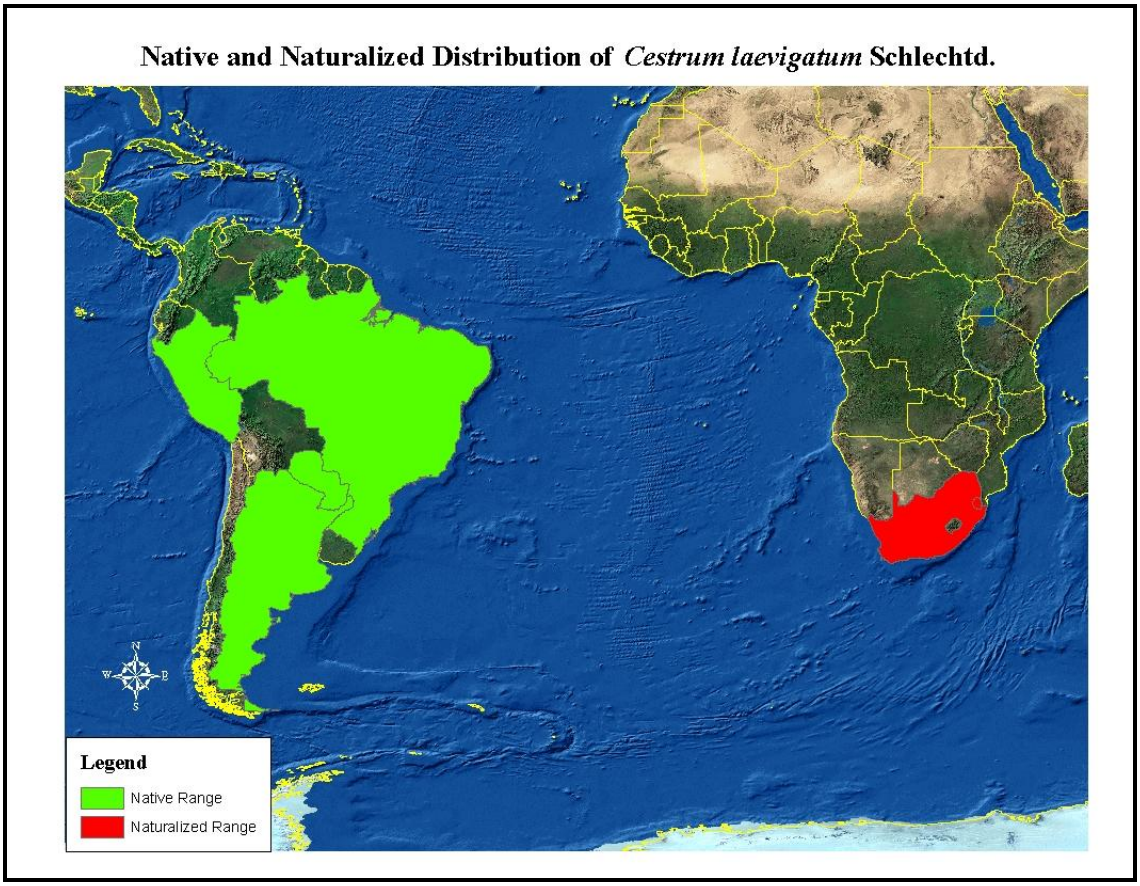

Figure 4. By Glenn Fowler, USDA APHIS PPQ CPHST, 2002 (Fowler, 2002)

Biology and Ecology: *Cestrum laevigatum* grows mainly near the coast in South Africa, invading forests, savannas, grasslands, plantations, riversides, and sand dunes. The species flowers between October and May (summer) in South Africa (Henderson 2001), while Reed (1977) indicates flowering in April to October (in Brazil?), fruiting June to November. The whole plant is poisonous to mammals, and in coastal Brazil it is used as a cannabis substitute (Mabberley, 1987).

Possible Pathways to the United States: Accidental introduction of *Cestrum laevigatum* is unlikely, but as an ornamental with additional medicinal or pharmaceutical interest, there is a significant risk of deliberate introduction. *Cestrum laevigatum* has been grown as an ornamental and hedge plant in South Africa.

Adverse Impact: *Cestrum laevigatum* is a "declared weed," regarded as an "ecological transformer." It can invade a wide range of habitats in both summer and winter rainfall zones and has potential to establish and create similar problems over a significant area of the United States.

Literature Cited:

Fowler, G. 2002. Distribution Map. USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, Raleigh, NC.

Henderson, L. 2001. Alien Weeds and Invasive Plants: A complete guide to declared weeds and invaders in South Africa. Plant Protection Research Council, Pretoria. 300 pp.

Mabberley, D. J. 1987. The Plant-Book: A Portable Dictionary of the Higher Plants. Cambridge University Press, New York. 706 pp.

NGRP. 2002. World Economic Plants in GRIN (Germplasm Resources Information Network). United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Resources Service, National Germplasm Resources Program (NGRP). Beltsville. Last accessed 2009.

Reed, C. F. 1977. Economically Important Foreign Weeds: Potential Problems in the United States. Agricultural Research Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Washington, DC. 746 pp.

Wells, M. J., A. A. Balsinhas, H. Joffe, V. M. Engelbrecht, G. Harding, and C. H. Stirton. 1986. A Catalogue of Problem Plants in Southern Africa. Memoirs of the Botanical Survey of South Africa 53:1-658.