

CORAL TREE

Mountain Immortelle, Pito, Immortelle, Poró

Erythrina poeppigiana

Leguminosae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Origin

Native to the river basins and upland forests of South America. It is now naturalized in Central America and the Caribbean at elevations as high as 2,000 m.

Uses

Coral Bean is a common agroforestry tree with a variety of uses such as: living fences and hedges, shade, mulching, support for vine crops and alley cropping. The wood is light and porous and more suited to canoes and carving than to fuel. *Erythrina* species have been reported as good sources of fodder in small amounts for ruminants due to potentially toxic alkaloids in the leaves. In addition, they have ornamental value with attractive orange-red flowers that can be eaten sparingly in salads and soups.

Common Names

- French
 - bois immortelle
- Indonesian
 - Dadap

Cultivation

Erythrina spp. can be propagated by seed, air layering, or cuttings. Soaking the seeds in water for 24 hours may enhance germination. Unrooted cuttings should be long stakes taken from young branches. However, there are reports of propagation from large fence-post type cuttings. For alleycropping, *E. poeppigiana* should be planted with 1-2 m between trees and 6-8 m between rows. If introducing *Erythrina spp.* to an area inoculation of seeds or cuttings with *Bradyrhizobium* bacteria is recommended. *E. poeppigiana* once established and given adequate annual rainfall (100-400 cm) is relatively easy to grow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Blunt thorns on woody parts of the plants should be avoided. For green manure purposes the crop is usually harvested once a year but more frequent cutting can be done if leaves are used as fodder. Collect the seeds from mature bean pods and store in a cool dry place until germination is desired.

Pests and Diseases

The pest that has raised the most concern with *Erythrina* sp. is the adult June beetle (*Phyllophaga menetriesi*) which feeds on the young leaves of trees. The root-eating larvae of the adult may be a risk for crops grown in association with the trees.

References

http://www.worldagroforestry.org/treedb/AFTPDFS/Erythrina_poeppigiana.PDF

Orwa C, A Mutua, Kindt R, Jamnadass R, S Anthony. 2009 Agroforestry Database: a tree reference and selection guide version 4.0 (<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/treedbs/treedatabases.asp>)