

# Selection of Plants seen in Portland Ridge on April 15, 2017

Mr. Patrick Lewis (M.Phil.), Curator at the Herbarium, Dept. Life Sci., UWI, Mona, identified the plants and Dr. Klaus W. Wolf, Electron Microscopy Unit, UWI, Mona, provided images and compiled the list with input from Mr. Lewis.

## TREES



***Albizia saman*** (Guango Tree) (Fabaceae), the name “*Samanea saman*” is obsolete, when standing alone, the tree is easy to distinguish by the dome-shaped canopy, insert: flower, right: fruit (the sugary and oily pods are eaten by cattle), images were taken on the grounds of St. Peter's Church in Alley



***Piscidia piscipula*** (Jamaican Dogwood) (Fabaceae), common in dry areas on sand and gravel, extracts from this tree were used by Native Americans of the West Indies to sedate fish and so catch them by hand, image: seeds with four papery wings



***Guajacum officinale*** (Lignum vitae) (Zygophyllaceae), national flower of Jamaica, the tree reaches a height of 10 m, one of the densest woods, sinks even in salt water, several preparations from the tree have been used to treat venereal diseases



***Casuarina equisetifolia*** (Willow) (Casuarinaceae), introduced from tropical Asia/Australia, reaches up to 35 m, often planted, it has been called “the best firewood in the world” and burns readily even when green, fixes nitrogen in a symbiosis with a bacterium of the genus “*Frankia*”, image: taken at “Sugar Wharf”



**Bursera simarubra** (Red Birch)  
(Burseraceae), the bark of mature trees (up to 15 m tall) is reddish and peeling off, common in dry woodlands, branches can be used as live fence posts, the resin is applied to sprains and used in varnish



**Cordia sebestena**  
(Red/Scarlet Cordia)  
(Boraginaceae), tree up to 10 m tall, widespread in sandy thickets and limestone rocks in dry coastal areas of South Florida, Central America and the Greater Antilles, the ripe fruits are white and reportedly edible



**Hippomane mancinella**  
(Manchineel Tree), tree up to 20 m, not common in thickets on limestone close to the sea, **all parts of this tree are very poisonous and to be avoided!**



**Morinda citrifolia** (Noni)  
(Rubiaceae, the coffee family), introduced from Southeast Asia/Australia, tree up to 10 m tall, salt tolerant, planted, “wine” from the fruit said to be good for boosting the immune system



***Peltophorum linnaei*** (Braziletto) (Cesalpiniaceae), tree up to 25 m tall, locally common in coastal areas of central and western parishes, an orange coloured dye used to be made from the wood



***Thespesia populnea*** (Seaside Mahoe) (Malvaceae), tree up to 10 m tall, common along the coast, water-resistant timber used for boat building, flowers edible



***Thrinax parviflora*** (Arecaceae), this endemic palm occurs from sea level up to an altitude of 900 m, common in central and western parishes, leaves used in broom making

## MANGROVES



***Rhizophora mangle*** (Red Mangrove) (Rhizophoraceae), common in swamps, characterized by roots that arise from higher sections of the stem (adventitious) and propagules (box), the origin of the common name “Red Mangrove” is uncertain but it might have something to do with a usage of the bark for dye making



**Avicennia germinans** (Black Mangrove) (Avicenniaceae), common in saline and brackish areas, characterized by pneumatophores, occasionally salt crystals are found on the leaves (white specks in the image), the name “Black Mangrove” refers to the colour of the trunk and heartwood



**Conocarpus erectus** (Button Mangrove) (Combretaceae), common in dryer areas such as inner margins of swamps, fruits resemble a button, reported to be good for smoking meat and fish as it burns very hot and slowly, the bark has been harvested for tannin.

## BROMELIA



**Bromelia pinguin** (Pinguin, Ping Wing) (Bromeliaceae), common in coastal thickets and dry bushy hillsides, the very ripe fruits are edible after a little roasting

## Agave



**Agave sobolifera** (May Pole) (Agavaceae), common in well drained hillsides

## CACTI



***Stenocereus hystrix*** (Cactus) (Cactaceae) columnar cactus common in southern coastal areas of Jamaica, widespread in southern parts of the US and throughout central America



***Harrisia gracilis*** (Cactus) (Cactaceae) branches 4 - 5 cm wide, common in southern coastal areas of Jamaica, occurs on the Cayman islands



***Hylocereus triangularis*** (God Okra) (Cactaceae), this creeping and climbing cactus is endemic to Jamaica according to Adams (1972), but widespread in the Caribbean according to the "Red List" of the International Union for Conservation of Nature ( <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/152652/0> ), it is locally common in Jamaica and occurs from sea level to an altitude of 1300 m, large white flowers, red fruit

## SUCCULENT PIANTS



***Batis maritima*** (Jamaican Samphire) (Bataceae), succulent shrub with stems trailing or ascending up to 1 m, halophyte, pioneer plant that quickly colonizes areas devoid of natural vegetation in the wake of a hurricane, locally abundant on the south coast, leaves occasionally added to salads in Puerto Rico



***Sesuvium portulacastrum*** (Seaside Purslane) (Aizoaceae), trailing succulent, occasionally reddish stem, purple flower, widespread around the world in sandy and rocky areas as well as salt marshes, has ornamental potential, pickled and eaten in the Philippines

## SHRUBS/WEEDS



***Jatropha gossypifolia*** (Bellyache Bush, Cassada Marble) (Euphorbiaceae), common in Jamaica in sandy places near the sea, seeds a somewhat poisonous purgative



***Althernanthera ficoidea*** (Crab Withe) (Amaranthaceae), common weed in shady places, raw or cooked leaves eaten with rice



***Abutilon trisulcatum*** (Malvaceae), much branched shrubby herb up to 1.5 m tall, common on roadsides and thickets



***Senna bicapsularis*** (Senna Tree, Yellow Candle Wood) (Fabaceae), shrub/tree up to 6 m tall, common on the coast and on dry limestone



***Acacia tortuosa*** (Wild Poponax) (Fabaceae), shrub/tree up to 8 m tall, locally very common on the south coast



***Prosopis juliflora*** (Cashaw) (Fabaceae), shrub/tree up to 15 m tall, locally common on the south coast, the roots are able to grow to a great depth in search of water



***Heliotropium curassavicum*** (Boraginaceae), branches spreading from a central woody stock, common in low lying areas, the leaves are bluish-green



***Capparis ferruginea*** (Mustard Shrub) (Capparaceae), shrub/tree up to 8 m tall, common in coastal areas, rare inland



***Rhabdadenia biflora*** (Mangrove Vine) (Apocyanaceae), vine with flexible stems, common on the margins of mangrove swamps, flowers pinkish-white with a yellow centre



*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* (Porter Weed, Vervine) (Verbenaceae), herb up to 1 m tall, very common at low elevations, used along with *Rivina humilis* (Dogberry) and *Satureja brownie* (Penny Royal) as a treatment for “blocked” fallopian tubes

## FERN



*Acrostichum aureum* (Giant Leather Fern) (Pteridaceae), fern up to 3 m tall, common in brackish and freshwater marshes on the south coast, the image was taken on the Salt River Road

## Literature:

Adams, C.D. (1972) Flowering Plants of Jamaica, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica

Carrington, S. (2007) Wild Plants of Barbados, Macmillan Publishers

Proctor, G.R. (1985) Ferns of Jamaica, British Museum (Natural History), London

Woods, K.W. (2003) Flowers of The Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands, Macmillan Publishers