

Savanna Plants of Guam



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Hedyotis megalantha
Star violet

This small perennial grows in the clay soils on the savannas of southern Guam. The white flowers make a striking contrast with the red clay. This species is endemic to Micronesia and its natural range is from Indo-Malaysia through the Pacific islands. On Guam, off-roading activities (see photo below), purposely set fires, and habitat loss due to development threaten this and other savanna plants.

In *Vegetation of the Tropical Pacific Islands*, authors Dieter Muller-Dombois and F. Raymond Fosberg indicated the reforestation of Guam's savannas to protect watersheds can best be accomplished through the elimination of fires.

Photos by Olympia Terral



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Morinda citrifolia
Lada, noni

This small tree produces fruits that, when ripe, are considered to have an unpleasant odor by many people. The sectional fruit matures from separate flowers. The roots, flowers, and bark are used medicinally and for making dyes.

Traditional healers in the Pacific use noni as a remedy to treat a broad range of ailments. Recent scientific literature reports hundreds of biologically active phytochemicals in noni fruit. Lada can grow in a variety of soil types including the clay soils of southern Guam.

Photos by Lauren Gutierrez & Olympia Terral



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Phyllanthus saffordii
Maigo lalo

Endemic to Guam, the spiral leaves form the branch tips of *Phyllanthus saffordii*. Maigo lalo grows in the savannas of southern Guam and is threatened, as are many plant species, by habitat loss due to development, fires that are purposely set in the grasslands, off-roading, pigs, and typhoons.

This plant is named in honor of the famed botanist and ethnologist William Safford. His book, *Useful Plants of Guam*, was originally published in 1905 from the work he did while living on the island from 1899 to 1900.

Photos by Olympia Terral





Blechnum orientale
Hard fern

This savanna fern is usually found at the edges of erosion areas and stream gullies. It is indigenous to Rota and Guam in the Marianas, tropical Asia, and the Pacific.

It has distinctive leaflets that extend down to the base of the midrib almost to the soil. This fern does not do well in cultivation, but thrives in the harsh conditions of the savanna. The young shoots can be cooked and eaten.

Photos by Olympia Terral and Lauren Gutierrez

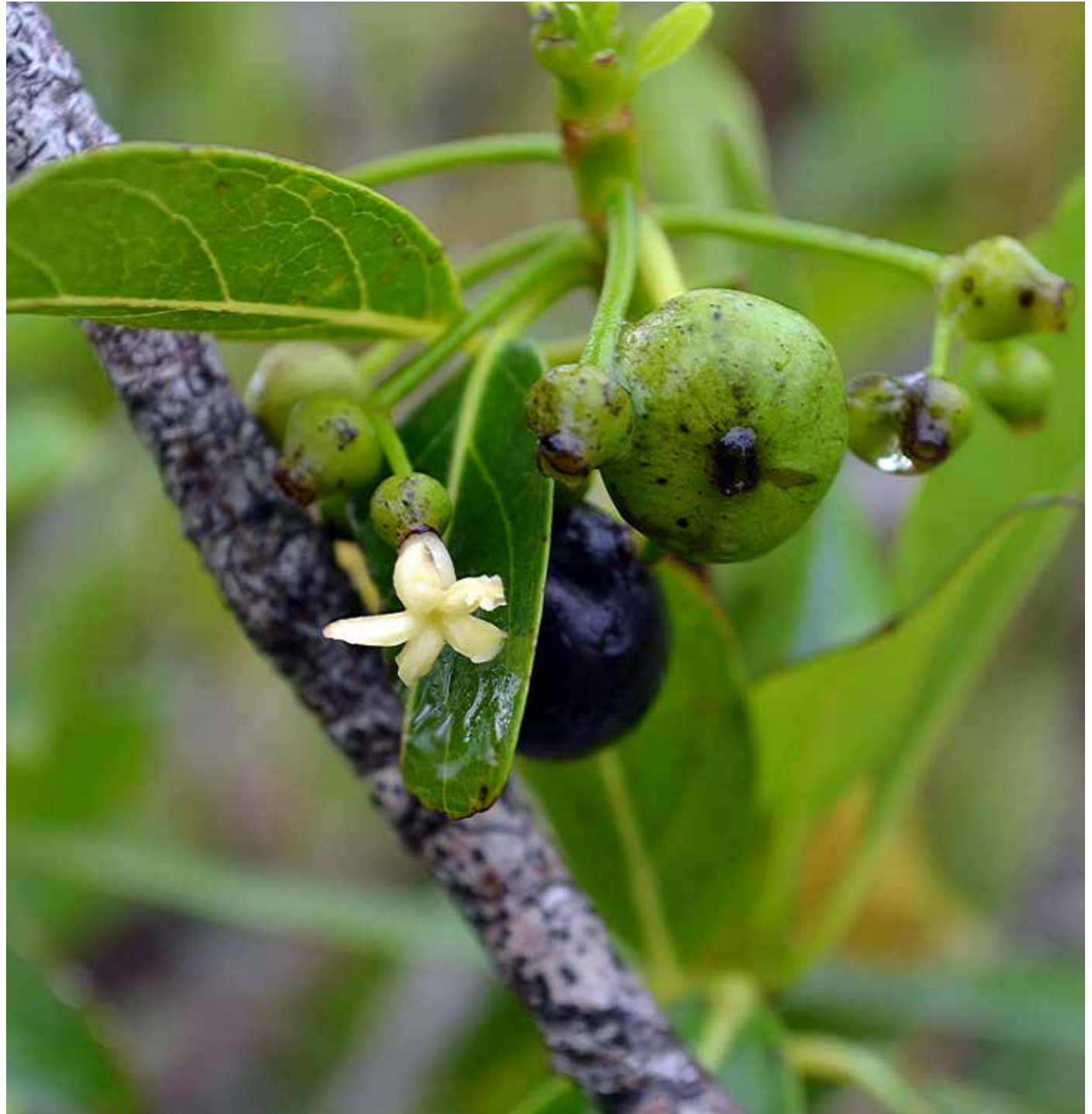


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Timonius nitidus
Sumak-lada

Endemic to Guam, this shrub grows as tall as two meters and is common on the savannas of southern Guam. Sumak-lada has been observed in Menengon, Tarzan Falls, Cotal conservation area off Cross Island Road, Cetti Bay, and Umatac. Target practice in the savannas may cause harm to the plants that live there.

Photos by Olympia Terral



Decaspermum fruticosum
Tailor tree

This plant grows well on the volcanic soils of the savanna. The young leaves are a descriptive red to pink that taper to a point. With its white flowers and purple fruits when they are mature, this small shrub stands out on the savanna.

Benjamin Stone, in his book *The Flora of Guam*, recommended this plant for gardens in southern Guam. "It is usually a shrub or small tree and will be appreciated for its compact habit and pretty foliage."

Photos by Olympia Terral





Dianella saffordiana
Flax lily

This delicately formed plant is in the lily family and commonly found in the southern savannas of Guam. The leaves look like grass at first glance, but when flowering there is no mistaking this lily for grass.

The flax lily is native to Guam and found in tropical Asia and the Pacific.

Photos by G. Curt Fiedler & Lauren Gutierrez



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Melastoma malabathricum
Gafao

This small shrub grows in the clay soils on the savannas of southern Guam. The white flowers make an eye-catching contrast with the red clay. It is endemic to Micronesia and ranges from Indo-Malaysia through the Pacific islands.

Gafao has been cultivated as an ornamental plant and can be easily propagated by seeds.

Photos by Olympia Terral





Arundina graminifolia
Bamboo orchid

This reedy orchid has naturalized on Guam bringing a splash of color to the southern savannas. It blooms continuously throughout the year with flowers lasting about three days.

Its delicate appearance contrasts greatly with the grasses, sedges, and ferns that populate the sunny and periodically dry conditions of the grasslands of Guam.

Photos by Olympia Terral



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Cycas micronesica Fadang

Cycas micronesica is found only on the islands of Guam, Rota, Yap, and Palau. It is currently listed as endangered on the International Union of Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species. It was once the most abundant tree species on Guam, but several invasive insects, the Asian cycad scale and the cycad blue butterfly, have reduced the population by 90%.

Photos by Olympia Terral





Pandanus tectorius
Kaffo'

Pandanus trees can be found on the clay soils of the savannas as well as in limestone forests. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants and the large, ripe fruits are eaten by fanihi (fruit bats).

The leaves are used for making mats and baskets while the roots produce a black dye.

Photos by Lauren Gutierrez



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Geodorum densiflorum
Nodding orchid

This terrestrial orchid grows with savanna grasses and flowers from June through August. By October, most plants have large seed pods. It drops all leaves and becomes dormant during the dry season.

Nodding orchids are found in Australia north to Taiwan and east to New Caledonia and Fiji.

Photos by V. R. Vinaya Raj (Wikimedia)





Rhynchospora rubra
Sweet broom

Rhynchospora means beaked seed. This is one of several types of sedges found on the southern savannas. The flowers form a dense cluster of spiklets that bring color to the grasslands.

Photos by Lauren Gutierrez



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Photos by Lauren Gutierrez



JANUARY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
					New Year's Day	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			☾			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			●			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
		Start of Fañomnåkan Semester	☾ First Day of Classes			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
				○		
31						



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