NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Invasive Species Fact Sheet

Pacific Islands Area – West

Coral vine (Antigonon leptopus)

Scientific name & Code: ***Antigonon leptopus*** Hook. & Arn., ANLE4

Synonyms - *Corculum leptopum* (Hook. & Arn.) Stuntz

Family: Polygonaceae (buckwheat family)

Common names: English – Coral vine, bride's tears, chain-of-love, Confederate vine, hearts on a chain, Mexican creeper
Chamorro – cadena de amor, flores kadena

Origin: Mexico

Description: Robust perennial vine, 10m long or longer. Leaves alternate, spiral, acute, heart-shaped to triangular, 3-9 cm long, the lower ones larger than the upper ones. Flowers in clusters along the terminal stem with tendrils at the end, 5 petals, bright pink or white, 1-4 cm long.

Propagation: Reproduces vegetatively (stems and tubers) and by seed. Buried stem pieces root at the nodes, aerial stems develop tangled masses of linked plants. Rarely produces seed but prolific when it does. Seed may remain viable for several years. Seeds float on water and can be transported to new locations. Fruits and seeds are eaten by wild and domestic animals (birds, pigs).

Distribution: Common in tropical countries. Identified on Agrigan, Pagan, Rota, Saipan, Tinian, and Guam

Habitat / Ecology: Grows well in disturbed areas, forest edges, dry to moist lowland areas, and is adapted to dry coral cliffs (and coral-derived soils – also favors high pH limestone soils). Tolerates drought well by shedding leaves and regrowing strongly after rain.

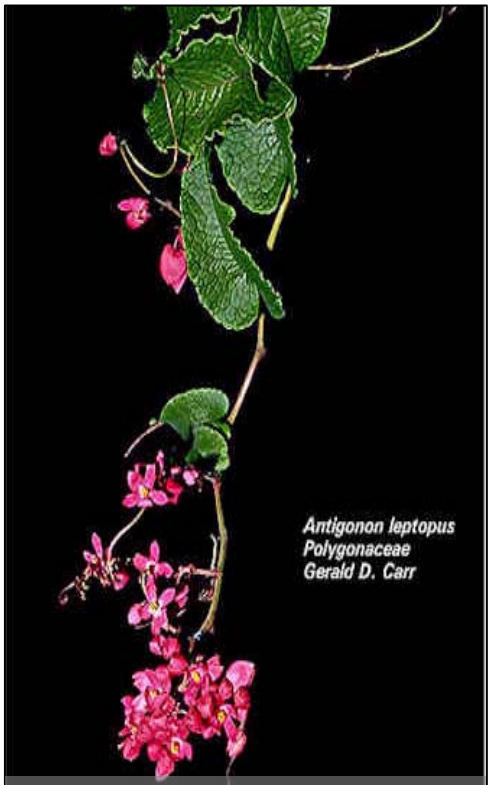
Environmental impact: Completely smothers other plants in the wet season, out-competing understory plants. Leaves dry and drop in the dry season providing fuel for wildfires.

Management: Physical – Cutting is ineffective, tubers must be removed or plants will re-sprout.

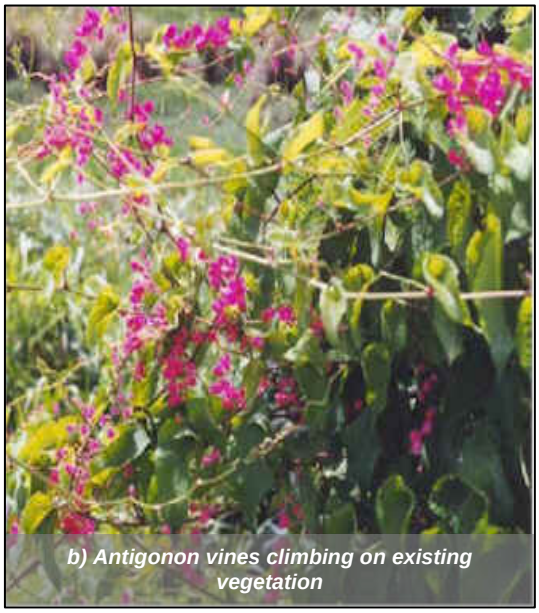
Chemical – Inconclusive effects of spraying when actively growing with Glyphosate mixed with a penetrant (surfactant).

Biological – No agents known at this time; some caterpillars may chew holes in leaves.

PIER Risk Assessment: High Risk, score: 19



a) Antigonon vine in flower showing leaves



b) Antigonon vines climbing on existing vegetation

c) Close-up of Antigonon flower

d) Antigonon seeds (nuts)

e) Antigonon flowers in clusters

Header: University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service
Photos a, b & c: Pacific Island Ecosystems at Risk (PIER): www.hear.org/Pier/index.html
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