

Tree Species No. TTS11

Erythrina fusca, Family Fabaceae

E. fusca is the most widely found *Erythrina* species, occurring in both the old and new worlds. It is believed that this species, or a close ancestor, is the basis from which the genus grew. It is tolerant of flooding and of saline conditions suggesting suitability for coastal regions. The seeds are also able to withstand prolonged submersion in saline solutions allowing its wide dispersal by sea. *E. fusca* is a nitrogen fixing plant and so can be planted in rows with other crops to supply nitrogen to the soil. The seeds are also known to have insecticidal properties against *Periplaneta americana*, the American cockroach.

Synonyms: *Erythrina glauca*, *Erythrina ovalifolia*.

Common names: Swamp immortelle, coral bean, bucaro, bucago, saibo, poró, bucare.

Distribution: This species occurs in both the old world and the new, but probably has a South American origin and is believed to have been dispersed by ocean currents. It can now be found in most warm temperate regions, such as South Africa and the Himalayas.

Ecology

Rainfall: 1219-1710mm.

Temperature: 18-25°C.

Altitude: 1100-1620m.

Soil type: *E. fusca* will tolerate most soil types and will grow on wet poorly drained soils in swamps and along streams.

Botany

Height: 10-23m.

Flowers: Flowers are large, orange, and have a claw-like shape.

Fruit: The fruit is a long, twisted pod.

Uses

Main: It is commonly used to improve soil fertility because it fixes nitrogen in the soil. It is also used as a shade tree for cocoa and coffee, and yields of these crops have been visibly greater when they are planted close to *E. fusca*. It is also commonly used as a living fence.

Others: Mulching and local medicines.

Cultural instructions

Seeds: There are approximately 2000 seeds/kg. The seeds float and can remain viable after prolonged immersion in salt.

Germination: 60-80%.

Management: *E. fusca* can be pollarded, lopped, and coppiced.

Other

Limitations: The wood is susceptible to termite attack.

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