

Botanic name: *Rivina humilis* L. -- Sp. Pl. 1: 121. 1753 [1 May 1753] (IK)

Common name: Pigeonberry, Rouge plant, Fertility bush, Dog blood bush

Family: Phytolaccaceae

Habitat: Terrestrial

Distribution: Native to tropical S. America - Argentina and Paraguay, north through the Caribbean to Florida and Arkansas, and through Central America to Texas and New Mexico. Introduced in India, Australia, South Africa and pacific islands as an alien invasive species. Grows aggressively and dislodge other species by its strong root system, high germination capacity, and easy dispersal by birds. In SA, the plant is tagged as CARA 2002 – Category 1 NEMBA – Category 1b

Description: A perennial erect shade-tolerant herb; leaves about 4-12 x 1.5-4 cm, quite thin, simple, alternate, wilting quickly when picked. Twigs glabrous, longitudinally grooved, rather pithy. Scattered pale-coloured hairs usually present along the midrib on the underside of the leaf blade. Petiole with two rows of glandular hairs on the upper surface; flowers tiny pale pink-white, are about 1/4 inch across, white to pink, growing on the last 2-3 inches of the stems, arranged in a raceme; tepals about 2-2.5 mm long, glabrous; anthers glabrous; ovary subglobose, glabrous, style short with an extension running down the side of the; fruits are numerous, berry, brilliantly red and almost translucent, often appearing on the lower part of the stem while the upper part is still blooming.

Phytochemicals: Alkaloids, saponins, flavonoids, quinines, glycosides, cardiac glycosides, flavones, steroids, phytosteroids, phlobatanins, vacuolar pigments betalains, mitogens

Medicinal/ Economic uses: Used for catarrh and for treating wounds, bruises and cuts (leaves). A tea prepared from leaves are helpful as skin ointments, used as herbal bath, and good for headache. Leaf decoction is reportedly useful in cleaning of the fallopian tube, and in treating inflammation of the stomach, joints and other body parts, and infertility. Ornamental due to its brilliantly coloured, rather handsome berries and contrasting white inflorescence. Fruits are edible to birds. Red dye obtained from the fruits are used for dyeing small articles or even as an ink. Fresh leaves, roots and fruit are poisonous. According to Nellis (1997), consumption of *Rivina* fruits causes numbness of the mouth within 2 hours, with a feeling of warmth in the throat and stomach and those symptoms are followed by coughing, thirst, tiredness with yawning, vomiting, and diarrhea, sometimes bloody.

