

## STEGNOSPERMATACEAE

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A neotropical family of a single genus of erect or scrambling shrubs, distributed from western Mexico south to Nicaragua, and the Greater Antilles; found in thickets, dry forests, seasonally dry forests, and secondary plant formations between 30–500 m elevation.

**Diagnosics:** Scrambling vines with short, alternate, hanging branches; stems blackish, lenticellate, cross section with successive cambia that produce concentric rings of xylem and phloem; leaves alternate, simple, spirally disposed, coriaceous; fruit a valvicular capsule.

### General Characters

1. **STEMS.** Cylindrical, with scanty secondary growth, reaching 5–10 m in length and less than 1 cm in diam.; cross sections with successive cambia that produce concentric rings of xylem and phloem, dissected by numerous narrow rays (Figure 232A); bark is relatively smooth, charcoal gray with numerous small, light lenticels (Figure 232B).
2. **EXUDATES.** No visible exudate.
3. **CLIMBING MECHANISMS.** Climbing *Stegnosperma* are scrambling vines, with short, alternate, hanging branches.
4. **LEAVES.** Alternate, exstipulate, coriaceous, simple, entire, elliptic to spatulate; petioles short, glandless.
5. **INFLORESCENCE.** Axillary racemes or distal on short lateral branches.
6. **PEDICELS.** Elongated.
7. **FLOWERS.** Bisexual, actinomorphic; calyx of 4 free, petaloid sepals; corolla of 5 caducous petals; stamens 13–20, the filaments free; ovary superior, 3–5-locular, with a single basal ovule per locule, the style free, stout, as many as the number of carpels.

8. FRUIT. Coriaceous, valvical capsule with persistent spreading sepals at the base.

**STEGNOSPERMA** Bentham, Bot. Voyage Sulphur 17. 1844.

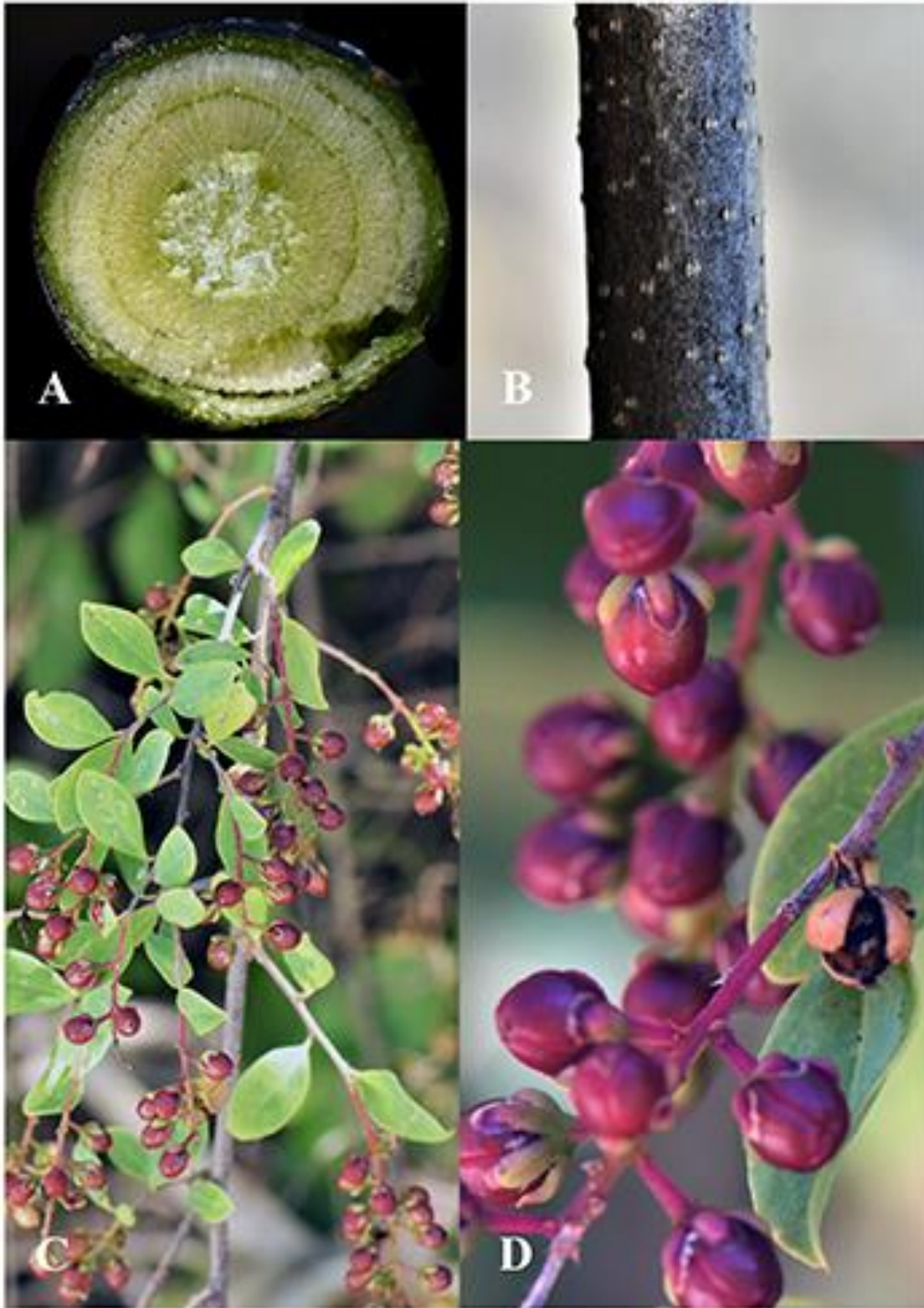
Shrubs or scrambling vines; glabrous or pubescent. Stems with scanty secondary growth reaching less than 1 cm in diam., and up to 10 m in length; cross section with successive cambia producing concentric rings of xylem and phloem, that are dissected by numerous, narrow rays; bark is relatively smooth, charcoal gray to reddish brown with numerous small, lenticels. Leaves alternate, spirally arranged, simple; petioles short, articulate near the base; exstipulate.

Inflorescences of axillary racemes or terminal on short lateral branches; bracts and bracteoles minute, persistent. Calyx of 5 free sepals; corolla of 5 caducous petals; stamens 10; ovary superior, syncarpous, with 3–5 uniovulate carpels, the styles free, as numerous as the carpels.

Fruit a globose valvical capsule, dehiscent from the apex toward the base; seeds 1–5, subglobose.

**Distinctive features:** Scrambling vines with alternate leaves; stem cross sections with successive cambia.

**Distribution:** A genus of four species, three of which are scrambling vines, distributed from western Mexico south to Nicaragua, and the Greater Antilles; found in thickets, dry forests, seasonally dry forests, and secondary plant formations; 30–500 m.



**Figure 232.** *Stegnosperma cubense*. **A.** Stem cross section with successive cambia. **B.** Stems showing dark, smooth, and lenticellate bark. **C.** Hanging fruiting branch. **D.** Capsules. Photo by P. Acevedo.

