



# Hunik

## *Tournefortia argentea*

Native Plants of Guam

**H**unik is a small tree that is native to the Marianas and other Pacific islands. This tree grows along beach strands and tolerates harsh coastal conditions.

**Other Common Names:** Amolose, Beach Heliotrope, Bunek, Chen, Evu, Roronibebe, Hunek, Hunig, Hunik, Irin, Kiden, Sesen, Sruhsruh, Tahinu, Tai'inu, Tau'unu, Taihuni, Tauhunu, Tausuni, Tchel, Tere, Te ren, Titin, Touhuni, Tree heliotrope, Velvet leaf soldierbush, Yamolehat

**Synonyms:** *Argusia argentea*, *Messerschmidia argentea*, *Tournefortia arborea*, *Tournefortia sarmentosa*, *Tournefortia sericea*

**Family Name:** Boraginaceae

### Plant Appearance

**Distinctive feature:** Hunik leaves are light green with silky white pubescence on the underside; these fuzzy silvery leaves are the reason it's also called "velvet leaf." The inflorescence is noticeable, composed of many small white flowers that attract butterflies.

#### Leaf

**Shape:** Obovate to oblanceolate (more pointed end at the base)

**Arrangement:** Spiraled at branch tips

**Type:** Simple, alternate

#### Flower

**Size:** Each individual flower is about 0.24 in. in diameter and 0.08 in. height.

**Color:** White

**Shape:** Both calyx and corolla are five-lobed (roundish).

**Arrangement:** The flowers are arranged in multi-branched, terminal, paniculate or scorpeoid cymes.

**Flowering period:** Throughout the year



Hunik flowers<sup>a</sup>.



Hunik leaves<sup>b</sup>.



Hunik fruit<sup>a</sup>.



Hunik seeds<sup>a</sup>.



Hunik seedling<sup>a</sup>.

### Habit

**Typical height:** Up to 25 ft.

### Fruit

**Type:** Nutlet

**Size:** About 0.2-0.3 in. long (pea size)

**Color:** Green to yellow, eventually turning brown

**Number of seeds:** 2-4

**Edible:** No

## Growing Your Own

### PROPAGATION

**Form:** Seeds, cuttings, and air-layering

**Seed collection:** Collect mature fruits from the tree. The fruit becomes translucent and soft when ripe.

**Seed treatment:** None

**Cuttings:** Hard wood is recommended as green wood may rot. Take 6-12 inch cutting, which root in 3-6 weeks. Trees grown this way can flower in a year.

**Germination time:** 2-4 weeks

**Planting depth:** About 0.25 in. deep

**Pre-planting:** Seedlings should be at least 14 inches tall with a stem diameter of at least 0.4 inches to be transplanted.

**Special hints:** Sow seeds in pots or flats. If sowing in flats, wait for the seedlings to develop 4-6 sets of leaves before moving to individual containers. During the first month, partial sunlight is best before moving into full sun.

**Pollinators:** Bees, wasps, moths, and butterflies

## Production Conditions

**pH value:** 6.1-7.4 (Neutral)

**Water:** Low

**Salt tolerance:** High

**Wind tolerance:** High

**Soil characteristics:** Prefers light and medium texture soils such as sands, sandy loams, loams, and sandy clay loams. It also tolerates shallow, saline, and infertile soils.

**Light:** Full sun or partial shade

**Space requirement:** 8-15 ft.

**Growth rate:** 3+ ft. per year

**Growth direction:** Domed and spreading

**Fertilizer:** A well-drained potting medium is acceptable with a mixture of some sand. Light fertilization with the use of mulch or organic matter is recommended to hasten growth.

**Pruning:** Lightly prune to maintain a desired shape.

## Risks

**Near surface roots:** None

**Limb breakage:** Low

**Pests:** It is subject to Heliotrope moth larvae, *Utetheisa pulchelloides*, which contains poisonous alkaloids. When pest (larvae) populations are high and damage to plant is severe, BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) products can be sprayed and contact insecticides such as pyrethroids can also be used.

## How to Use This Plant

Although Hunik is a slow-growing plant, it is drought-tolerant and capable of growing in saline conditions, nutrient-poor sands, and rocky soils.

**Agroforestry:** Screen against salt spray, coastal soil stabilization, shade tree, ornamental, hedge, living fence, windbreak

**Wildlife:** The tree is a nesting site for ocean birds.

**Medicinal:** Traditionally, the meristem and root inner bark are pounded to cure children's rashes, diarrhea, and fish poisoning. Leaves are used in medicinal teas and steam baths, or to treat bruises and stop bleeding. The soft inner bark of the root when mixed with coconut meat can be used to treat hemorrhoids. Root extracts are also used to treat rheumatism.

**Other uses:** The wood is used in house construction, canoe building, fuelwood, handicrafts, garland or leis, frames for diving goggles, gongs, knife and other tool handles. The leaves are used in the preparation of red dye, crushed for deodorant, and eaten raw.

## References and Resources

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### Photo Credits

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### Contributors

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### Acknowledgements

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### Notes

This publication is an update of: Joseph Tuquero. 2005. *Hunik*. Guam Department of Agriculture. 2pp.

### For Further Information

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