
Herbs annual. Stem erect, much branched, glabrous or arachnoid hairy. Leaves alternate, sessile, terete, fleshy, base expanded, apex obtuse or aristate awned; leaf axil fascicular pilose. Flowers borne in axillary glomerules, bisexual and female (plants polygamous), with 2 bractlets. Perianth conic, 5-parted; segments lanceolate or broadly so, in fruit with a membranous wing near apex abaxially. Stamens 2 or 5; anthers oblong, without an appendage. Ovary ovoid, laterally compressed; style short; stigmas 2, filiform. Fruit a utricle, enclosed by perianth; pericarp membranous, adnate to seed. Seed vertical or horizontal, orbicular; testa membranous or subleathery; embryo spiral; perisperm absent.

About three species: N Africa, C and SW Asia, S Europe; two species in China.

1a. Branches arachnoid hairy when young; leaf apex obtuse, sometimes mucronate; flowers usually 2 or 3 per glomerule; stamens 5; seed horizontal .................................................. 2. *H. arachnoideus*

1b. Branches not arachnoid hairy when young; leaf apex aristate awned, awn sometimes deciduous; flowers usually 4–6 per glomerule; stamens usually 2; seed vertical .......................................................... 1. *H. glomeratus*


Salt grass yan sheng cao

Plants 5–30 cm tall. Branches alternate, basal ones subopposite, gray-green, smooth or densely papillate, not arachnoid hairy when young. Leaves 4–12 × 1.5–2 mm, apex aristate awned, awn sometimes deciduous. Flowers usually 4–6 per glomerule. Perianth segments lanceolate, membranous, abaxially 1-veined; abaxial wing semi-orbicular, subequal, membranous, distinctly veined, sometimes not developed and then perianth thickened, becoming leathery. Stamens usually 2. Seed vertical. Fl. and fr. Jul–Sep.

Gobi desert, foothills, arid slopes. W Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Xizang [Mongolia, Russia (S Siberia); C Asia; naturalized and highly invasive in SW North America].

1a. Stem and branches smooth ............... 1a. var. glomeratus

1b. Stem and branches densely papillate ...... 1b. var. tibeticus

1a. Halogeton glomeratus var. glomeratus

Salt grass (var. glomeratus) yan sheng cao (yu bian zhong)


Stem and branches smooth.

Gobi desert, foothills. W Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Xizang [Mongolia, Russia (S Siberia); C Asia].


xizang yan sheng cao


Arid slopes. Qinghai, Xinjiang, Xizang [C Asia].


Arct or salt grass bai jing yan sheng cao

Micropeplis arachnoidea (Moquin-Tandon) Bunge; Sal-sola aptera Handel-Mazzetti.

Plants 10–40 cm tall. Branches alternate, gray-white, arachnoid hairy when young, later glabescent. Leaves 3–10 × 1.5–2 mm, apex obtuse, sometimes mucronate. Flowers usually 2 or 3 per glomerule; bractlets ovate, margin membranous. Perianth segments broadly lanceolate, membranous; abaxial wing semi-orbicular, subequal, pellucid membranous, distinctly veined. Stamens 5; filaments narrowly linear. Seed horizontal, 1–1.5 mm in diam. Fl. and fr. Jul–Aug.

Arid slopes, sandy places, riversides. Gansu, Nei Mongol, Ningxia, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Xinjiang [C Asia].

Local people burn the plants to obtain soda for cooking.