

**18. THESPESIA** Solander ex Corrêa, Ann. Mus. Natl. Hist. Nat. 9: 290. 1807, nom. cons.

桐棉属 tong mian shu

*Azanza* Alefeld; *Bupariti* Duhamel du Monceau; *Parita* Scopoli; *Pariti* Adanson.

Trees or shrubs; plants glabrous or pubescent, with an indumentum of scales or stellate hairs. Leaves simple; stipules very slender; leaf blade ovate, entire or lobed, margin entire, often with abaxial foliar nectaries. Flowers solitary (rarely in small cymes), axillary, large and showy. Epicalyx lobes 3–5, minute, caducous after flowering, sometimes subtended by 3-merous nectaries. Calyx cup-shaped, truncate to 5-lobed. Corolla campanulate; petals 5, yellow [or white or pink], with or without dark purple basal spot. Staminal column antheriferous throughout; apex 5-toothed, usually included. Ovary 5-loculed; ovules several per locule; style rod-shaped, 5-grooved; stigma 3–5-sulcate or rarely 3–5-lobed, decurrent. Capsule 3–5-locular, globose or pyriform, leathery or woody, dehiscent or indehiscent, sometimes slightly fleshy. Seeds 3 to many per locule, obovoid, glabrous or hairy.

About 17 species: tropical Africa, America, Asia, Australia; two species in China.

Molecular data (Seelanan et al., Syst. Bot. 22: 259–290. 1997) suggest that *Thespesia* may not be monophyletic and reinforce the morphologically based observation of Fryxell (Nat. Hist. Cotton Tribe, 1979) that there are significant discontinuities between the two sections currently recognized: *T.* sect. *Thespesia* and *T.* sect. *Lampas* (Ulbrich) Borssum Waalkes. A representative of each section occurs in China.

- 1a. Plants stellate tomentose; leaf blade palmately 3-lobed; capsule slightly 5-angular, ellipsoid; seeds ca. 5 mm, with 1 series of hairs near hilum ..... 1. *T. lampas*  
1b. Plants with peltate scales at least abaxially, stellate hairs absent; leaf blade cordate, entire; capsule subglobose or pyriform; seeds uniformly hairy or glabrous ..... 2. *T. populnea*

**1. *Thespesia lampas*** (Cavanilles) Dalzell & A. Gibson, Bombay Fl. 19. 1861.

白脚桐棉 bai jiao tong mian

*Hibiscus lampas* Cavanilles, Diss. 3: 154. 1787; *Azanza lampas* (Cavanilles) Alefeld; *Bupariti lampas* (Cavanilles) Rothmaler.

Shrubs evergreen, 1–2 m tall. Branchlets stellate tomentose. Stipule filiform, 5–7 mm; petiole 1–4 cm, stellate puberulent; leaf blade ovate or palmately 3-lobed, 8–13 × 6–13 cm, abaxially densely ferruginous stellate tomentose, adaxially sparsely stellate pilose, base rounded or nearly cordate, apex acuminate, lateral lobes with margin shallowly crenate, apex acuminate or rounded. Flowers solitary or in cymes, axillary; peduncle 3–8 cm. Pedicel 0.5–1 cm, stellate puberulent. Epicalyx lobes 5, subulate, 2–3 mm. Calyx shallowly cup-shaped, subtruncate with 5 subulate 4–8 mm teeth, stellate puberulent. Corolla yellow, campanulate, ca. 6 cm; petals abaxially densely ferruginous puberulent. Capsule ellipsoid, 5-angular, ca. 2 cm in diam., stellate puberulent, loculicidally dehiscent. Seeds black, ovoid, ca. 5 mm, smooth, with a ring of hairs near hilum. Fl. Sep–Jan.

Scrub. Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Yunnan [India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam; E Africa].

Cotton from the seeds of *Thespesia lampas* has been used to make clothing.

**2. *Thespesia populnea*** (Linnaeus) Solander ex Corrêa, Ann. Mus. Natl. Hist. Nat. 9: 290. 1807.

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*Hibiscus populneus* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 694. 1753; *Bupariti populnea* (Linnaeus) Rothmaler; *H. populneoides* Roxburgh; *Malvaviscus populneus* (Linnaeus) Gaertner; *Parita populnea* (Linnaeus) Scopoli; *Thespesia howii* S. Y. Hu; *T.*

*populneoides* (Roxburgh) Kostelezky.

Trees or shrubs, evergreen, 3–6 m tall. Branchlets with minute brown peltate scales, sometimes dense. Stipules filiform-lanceolate, 2–7 mm, usually caducous; petiole 4–10 cm, scaly; leaf blade ovate-cordate to triangular, 7–18 × 4.5–12 cm, abaxially with scales, adaxially glabrous or with scales, base truncate to cordate, margin entire, apex long caudate. Flowers solitary, axillary. Pedicel 2.5–6 cm, densely scaly. Epicalyx lobes 3–4, filiform-lanceolate, 8–10 mm, usually caducous, scaly. Calyx cup-shaped, 1–1.5 cm in diam., subtruncate with 5 ca. 0.5 mm teeth, densely scaly. Corolla yellow, adaxially purple at base, campanulate, ca. 5 cm. Staminal column ca. 25 mm. Fruit stipe 6–8 cm. Capsule globose to pyriform, ca. 5 × 2 cm in diam., slightly fleshy, ± indehiscent. Seeds triangular-ovoid, 8–9 mm, brown hairy or glabrous, veined. Fl. year-round.

Sea coasts, open situations; near sea level. Guangdong, Hainan, Taiwan [Cambodia, India, Japan (Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands), Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam; Africa; widely distributed in the tropics].

The wide distribution of this species is due to the capacity of its fruits to float in seawater and stay alive for months. It is often cultivated as a shade tree.

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