

1. BASELLA Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 272. 1753.

落葵属 luo kui shu

Herbs twining, annual or biannual. Spikes axillary; rachis long, thick. Bracts minute. Bracteoles and urceolate perianth adnate, ovoid or oblong, opening very little in anthesis, fleshy and enclosing the fruit after flowering. Flowers sessile; perianth segments short, fleshy, blunt, ridged on back, hardly opening at anthesis, not wing-shaped in fruit. Stamens included; filaments inserted near apex of perianth tube, very short, erect in bud; anthers dorsifixed, or versatile. Styles 3; stigmas linear. Utricle globose, fleshy. Embryo spiral; cotyledons large, thin.

Five species: one species endemic to tropical Africa, three endemic to Madagascar, one pantropical; one species (probably introduced) in China.

1. Basella alba Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 272. 1753.

落葵 luo kui

Basella rubra Linnaeus.

Herbs annual. Stems green or red, to 10 m, fleshy, glabrous. Petiole 1–3 cm; leaf blade ovate or rotund, 3–9 × 2–8 cm, base shallowly cordate or rotund, margin entire, apex acuminate. Spikes 3–15(–20) cm. Bracteoles oblong. Perianth red-

dish or purplish, ovate-oblong, 3–4 mm, base pale, margin entire, apex blunt. Filaments white; anthers yellowish. Utricle red to dark red or black, 5–6 mm in diam., containing violet juice. Fl. May–Sep, fr. Jul–Oct.

Widely cultivated in China, naturalized in S China [pantropical].

Sometimes regarded as native, this species has long been cultivated as a vegetable and an ornamental. The juice is harmless and used as a food coloring. The plants are used medicinally.

