

34. RICINUS Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 1007. 1753.

蓖麻属 bi ma shu

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Annual herbs or herbaceous shrubs; indumentum absent; stems hollow. Leaves alternate; stipules united, deciduous, leaving circular scar around node; petiole long, apex with 2 glands, insertion peltate; leaf blade palmately lobed. Inflorescences terminal, branched or unbranched, bisexual; bracts broadly triangular, deciduous; male flowers proximal, female flowers distal. Male flowers: calyx 3–5-lobed, valvate, closed in bud; petals absent; disk absent; stamens very many; filaments united into ca. 25 phalanges; anthers 2-locular, subglobose. Female flowers: sepals 5, valvate, deciduous; petals absent; ovary 3-locular, softly spiny, sometimes tuberculate; styles 3, 2-lobed. Fruit a capsule, 3-locular, usually echinate. Seeds large, compressed-ovoid, smooth, marbled, carunculate.

One species: widely cultivated in tropical to temperate regions and frequently occurring as a ruderal weed; fossil remains suggest that it is perhaps native to NE Africa.

1. Ricinus communis Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 1007. 1753.

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Herbs erect, often single-stemmed but sometimes bushlike or treelike, 2–5(–10) m tall; younger parts glaucous, whole plant often reddish or purplish. Stipules connate, 2–3 cm; petiole 20–40 cm; leaf blade palmately 7–11-lobed, 30–50(–100) × 30–50(–100) cm, margin serrate. Inflorescence to 30 cm. Male flowers: pedicels 5–17 mm; calyx lobes 5–8 × 3–5 mm; stamens 7–8 mm. Female flowers: pedicels 5–10 mm; sepals ca. 5 mm;

styles 2–5 mm. Fruiting pedicel to 45 mm; capsule ellipsoid or ovoid, 1.5–2.5 cm, echinate, spines to ca. 5 mm, sometimes smooth. Seed 7–12 mm, grayish, silvery, or beige with darker markings; caruncle depressed-conical, 2–3 mm wide. Fl. Jun–Sep, or Jan–Dec.

Cultivated, ruderal weed, sometimes naturalized in riverbeds; below 100–500(–2300) m. Throughout China [cultivated worldwide].

The seeds yield castor oil, used medicinally and as an industrial lubricant. The seeds are highly toxic.

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