

## 11. CAPSICUM Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 188. 1753.

辣椒属 la jiao shu

Shrubs or annual or perennial herbs; pubescence of simple hairs. Stems branched. Leaves solitary or paired, petiolate; leaf blade simple, entire or sinuate. Inflorescences solitary or few-flowered clusters at branch forks or leaf axils; peduncle absent. Flowers nodding or erect, actinomorphic. Pedicel erect or nodding. Calyx broadly campanulate to cup-shaped, denticulate, sometimes slightly enlarged. Corolla white, blue, or violet, campanulate or rotate, divided halfway or more. Stamens inserted near distal end of corolla tube; filaments slender; anthers yellow or purplish, ovoid, dehiscing longitudinally. Ovary 2- (or 3)-locular; ovules numerous. Style slender; stigma small, capitate. Fruit a moist berry, sometimes large, erect, nodding, or reflexed. Seeds yellowish, discoid; embryo coiled, subperipheral.

About 25 species: all in South America, two or three cultivated and naturalized worldwide; one species in China.

### 1. *Capsicum annuum* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 188. 1753.

辣椒 la jiao

*Capsicum annuum* var. *conoide* (Miller) Irish; *C. annuum* var. *fasciculatum* (Sturtevant) Irish; *C. annuum* var. *grossum* (Linnaeus) Sendtner; *C. conoide* Miller; *C. fasciculatum* Sturtevant; *C. frutescens* Linnaeus; *C. frutescens* var. *fasciculatum* L. Bailey; *C. frutescens* var. *longum* L. Bailey; *C. frutescens* var. *grossum* L. Bailey; *C. grossum* Linnaeus; *C. longum* de Candolle.

Shrubs or annual or perennial herbs, 20–80 cm tall. Stems glabrescent. Leaves solitary or paired; petiole 4–7 cm; leaf blade oblong-ovate, ovate, or ovate-lanceolate, 4–13 × 1.5–4 cm, glabrescent, base narrowed, margin entire, apex short acuminate or acute. Inflorescences solitary flowers or few-flowered clusters. Pedicel bent at apex, 1–2 cm. Calyx cup-shaped, undulate, 2–3 × 3 mm. Corolla white, ca. 1 cm. Anthers purplish, 1.8–2 mm. Berry mostly red (orange, yellow, or purple in cultivation), variously shaped, up to 15 cm. Seeds pale yellow, discoid or reniform, 3–5 mm. Fl. May–Aug, fr. Jul–Nov.

Widely cultivated in China [native to Mexico and South America, widely cultivated and naturalized throughout the world].

The species includes forms with sweet or pungent fruits. The fruits are an important vegetable and flavoring, and the seed oil is edible. Fruits are used medicinally for inducing sweat. Plants are sometimes cultivated as ornamentals. During its long cultivation, many cultivars have been selected with very different fruit appearance.

The practice of referring woody plants of this species to *Capsicum frutescens* Linnaeus has little merit since herbaceous plants often become woody with age, and other characters supposed to distinguish the two species occur in various populations in both herbaceous and woody plants.

