
Herbs annual or perennial, stoloniferous. Stems erect, nodes hairy, base sometimes woody. Leaves cordate-ovate to lanceolate, papery, margin dentate. Verticillasters few flowered, lax, in terminal or sometimes axillary racemes, sometimes 2-flowered; floral leaves leaflike, lanceolate, gradually reduced upward; bracteoles 2, small, subulate or nearly bristly. Calyx campanulate or tubular-campanulate, hairy, glabrous inside, 15-veined, dilated in fruit, 2-lipped; teeth ovate-triangular to lanceolate, 3 in upper lip, 2 in abaxial. Corolla purplish to purple, tubular, base narrower, gradually dilated to throat, not hairy annulately inside, 2-lipped; upper lip shorter, straight, apex emarginate or 2-lobed; lower lip long, 3-lobed, with middle lobe larger. Stamens 4, didynamous, included or posterior 2 slightly exserted, sometimes slightly complanate; anthers 2, puberulent. Style slender, exserted, apex equally 2-cleft. Nutlets oblong to oblong-ovoid, glabrous.

About seven species: six in temperate to subtropical Asia, one in North America; five species in China.

1a. Leaves ovate to narrowly lanceolate, base slightly cordate or cuneate.

2a. Leaves ovate, base subtruncate to slightly cordate, 2.8–5 cm wide; inflorescence short, floral leaves different from cauline leaves ................................................................................. 4. M. faber

2b. Leaves narrowly lanceolate to lanceolate, 1.2–2.5 cm wide; inflorescence long, floral leaves similar to cauline leaves ........................................................................................................................................................................ 5. M. pinfaensis

1b. Leaves cordate to ovate, base cordate, rarely truncate to rounded.

3a. Verticillasters in terminal and lateral racemes; calyx tube narrowly tubular ........................................................................... 3. M. henryi

3b. Verticillasters in terminal racemes or 2-flowered inserted in leaf axils of upper 2 or 3 leaf pairs on stem; calyx campanulate or ± tubular.

4a. Calyx campanulate, inconspicuously veined, floccose-villous on veins, teeth ovate to ovate-triangular, subequal ................................................................................................................................. 1. M. urticifolia

4b. Calyx narrow, ± tubular, conspicuously veined, sparsely pubescent on veins, teeth triangular to narrowly triangular ............................................................................................................................................ 2. M. fargesii


荨麻叶龙头草  qian ma ye long tou cao


Herbs perennial. Stems slender, erect, tufted, 20–40 cm, unbranched, villous or retrorse villous when young, glabrous or subglabrous except for nodes. Leaves largest at mid stem; petiole 0.5–4 cm, shorter toward apex, sometimes obsolete; leaf blade cordate to ovate-cordate, 3.2–8.2 × 2.6–6.8 cm, pilose, base cordate, margin serrate to crenate-serrate, apex acuminate to acute. Verticillasters 2- to few flowered, in terminal racemes; axillary floral leaves ovate to lanceolate, less than 3.5 cm, villous; bracteoles subulate, ca. 1 mm. Pedicel 3–9 mm. Calyx campanulate, 1.3–1.8 cm, floccose-pilose or sparsely puberulent; teeth ovate to ovate-triangular, ca. 3 mm, ciliate, apex acute or cuspidate, rarely acuminate, adaxial teeth longer. Corolla bluish purple to purple-red, 2.2–4 cm, villous, gradually dilated at apex; upper lip straight, elliptic, 2-lobed, lobes circular to suborbicular; lower lip dilated, middle lobe flabellate, apex emarginate; lateral lobes small, subovate to oblanceolate, 2/3–1/2 as long as middle lobe. Nutlets ovoid-oblong, adaxially slightly trigonous at base, pubescent, base small umbonate. Fl. May-Jun, fr. Jun.

Mossy areas in mixed and coniferous forests. Jilin, Liaoning [Japan, Korea, Russia].


华西龙头草  hua xi long tou cao

Herbs slender, base prostrate or stoloniferous, ascending-erect, 10–15 cm, pubescent. Leaves larger basally; petiole 0.5–2.5 cm, shorter toward apex; leaf blade cordate to oblanceolate, 2.5–15 × 2–4.5 cm, papery, adaxially sparsely stigose, abaxially pilose, base cordate, margin crenate to obtuse serrate, apex apiculate. Verticillasters 2- to (many) flowered, at upper 1–3 nodes or in a terminal raceme; bracts reduced toward stem apex, narrowly ovate to sublanceolate, margin dentate; bracteoles ca. 1 mm. Pedicel 2–6 mm. Calyx tubular, 1.5–1.8 cm, densely puberulent, upper lip longer; teeth ovate-triangular to narrowly triangular, sometimes slightly curved, 2–3 mm, ciliate, apex acuminate. Corolla reddish to purple-red, 2.8–4.5 cm, pubescent; tube straight, tubular, gradually dilated at apex; limb partly villous inside; upper lip straight, lobes circular to oblanceolate; middle lobe of lower lip subcircular, margin undulate; lateral lobes oblong to circular, 1/2 as long as middle lobe. Nutlets unknown. Fl. Apr-Jun, fr. Jul.

- Shady areas in mixed evergreen, and coniferous forests; 700–3500 m. Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, Zhejiang.

1a. Verticillasters 6- to many flowered, conspicuously pedunculate, in terminal racemes

2c. var. pedunculata

1b. Verticillasters 2-flowered, inconspicuously pedunculate, inserted in 1–3 upper stem nodes.

2a. Stem much branched, bearing trailing stolons; leaves oblanceolate, 3–15 cm, crenate

2b. Stem unbranched, base prostrate; leaves cordate or ovate to ± triangular, 2.5–6.5 cm, sparsely serrate or obtusely serrate.

3a. Leaves ovate to triangular-ovate, papery, short petiolate to sessile ........................................ 2d. var. pinetorum
3b. Leaves cordate, ovate-cordate to triangular-cordate, 2.8–6.5 cm, thin papery; petioles 0.5–2.5 cm, ..... 3a. var. fargesii

2a. Meehania fargesii var. fargesii

华西龙头草 hua xi long tou cao


Stems branched, base succulent. Petiole 0.5–2.5 cm; leaf blade cordate or ovate-cordate to triangular-cordate, 2.8–6.5 cm, papery. Verticillasters 2-flowered, short pedunculate, inserted in upper 1–3 stem nodes.

• Shady areas in mixed forests; 1900–3500 m. Sichuan, Yunnan.

Used medicinally.


走茎变种 zou jing bian zhong


• Evergreen and mixed deciduous broad-leaved forests; 1200–1800 m. Guangdong, Hubei, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, Zhejiang.

Used medicinally for colds and snake bites.


梗花变种 geng hua bian zhong

Dracocephalum urticifolium Miquel var. pedunculatum Hemsley, J. Linn. Soc., Bot. 26: 293. 1890.

Stems branched, without stolons. Leaves triangular-ovate. Verticillasters 6–7 cm; bracts ovate-lanceolate or lanceolate, 3–6 mm, margin dentate; bracteoles subulate, ca. 1 mm. Petiole 1–4 mm. Calyx narrowly tubular, opening slightly at mouth, 1–1.3 cm, puberulent, base saccate in fruit; teeth triangular, 3–4 mm, ciliate, apex acuminate, adaxial teeth longer. Corolla reddish purple or purplish, 2.3–2.7 cm, sparsely puberulent; tube straight, tubular, slender, gradually dilated at apex; upper lip slightly curved, lobes oblong; middle lobe of lower lip flabellate, apex emarginate, villous inside; lateral lobes slightly curved, lobes oblong, ca. 1/2 as long as middle lobe. Stamens included. Nutlets globose-oblong, smooth, densely pubescent, adaxially slightly triquetrous, base small umboante. Fl. Sep, fr. Oct.

• Streamsides, evergreen broad-leaved and mixed forests; 500–700 m. Guizhou, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan.

1a. Leaf blade narrowly elliptic-oblanceolate, base rounded ......................................................... 3c. var. stachydifolia

1b. Leaf blade cordate to narrowly triangular-ovate, base truncate to cordate.

2a. Leaves cordate to ovate, base cordate, undulate-serrate to coarsely serrate ........................... 3a. var. henryi

2b. Leaves narrowly triangular-ovate, base truncate to shallowly cordate, sparsely serrate

3a. Meehania henryi var. henryi

龙头草 long tou cao


Leaves cordate to ovate, base cordate, margin undulate-serrate to coarsely serrate.

• Evergreen broad-leaved and mixed forests of low elevations. Guizhou, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan.

Used medicinally as a tonic and for snake bites.

3b. Meehania henryi var. kaitcheensia

长叶变种 chang ye bian zhong


Leaves dilated at apex; leaf blade narrowly triangular-ovate, base truncate to shallowly cordate, margin sparsely serrate. Racemes terminal or axillary, composed of verticillasters.

• Valley streamsides, moist forests; 500 m. Guizhou.

圆基叶变种 yuan ji ye bian zhong


Petiole slightly dilated at apex, villous; leaf blade narrowly elliptic-oblong, base rounded, margin sparsely serrate. Terminal raceme shorter or ternate on stem apex.

- Streamsides in montane forests; 700 m. Guizhou.


肉叶龙头草 rou ye long tou cao

Dracocephalum faberi Hemsley, J. Linn. Soc., Bot. 26: 291. 1890; Meehania urticifolia (Miquel) Makino var. faberi (Hemsley) Kudô.

Herbs perennial. Stems erect, slender, 18–25 cm, unbranched, retrorse pubescent or puberulent when young, glabrescent except on nodes. Leaves in 2 or 3 pairs, crowded upward; petiole 0.5–2.5 cm, shorter to obsolete upward; leaf blade ovate to ovate-elliptic, 5–11 × 1.5–5 cm, ± succulent, adaxially subglabrous or puberulent, abaxially subglabrous, veins pilose or sparsely pubescent, margin sparsely undulate-crenate to dentate, rarely subentire, apex acute to acuminate or sometimes rounded. Verticillasters 2-flowered, in terminal or rarely axillary racemes; bracts ovate-lanceolate to lanceolate, 2–3 mm. Pedicel ca. 2 mm. Calyx tubular, gradually open at mouth, 1.1–1.3 cm, puberulent; teeth triangular-ovate, ca. 1/3 as long as calyx, apex acuminate. Corolla purple or reddish, 3.5–4 cm, puberulent; tube straight or slightly curved, gradually dilated at apex; upper lip straight, lobes oblong; middle lobe of lower lip nearly square, apex truncate or emarginate; lateral lobes oblong, ca. 1/2 as long as middle lobe. Nutlets unknown. Fl. Jul-Sep, fr. Oct.

- Mixed forests; 1500 m. Gansu, Sichuan.


狭叶龙头草 xia ye long tou cao


Herbs annual. Stems ca. 50 cm, slender, erect, unbranched, pubescent or retrorse pubescent when young, glabrescent, villous on nodes. Petiole 0.4–2.5 cm, shorter toward stem apex; leaf blade narrowly lanceolate to lanceolate, sometimes slightly curved, 6–12 × 1.2–2.5 cm, papery, puberulent, base rounded to subtruncate, margin sparsely serrulate or undulate-serrulate, apex acuminate. Verticillasters 2-flowered, in upper axils; bracts lanceolate, less than 2.5 cm, margin dentate or subentire. Pedicel 1–4 mm. Calyx tubular, slightly open at mouth, ca. 1.2 cm, puberulent, saccate in fruit; teeth triangular-ovate to subtriangular, ca. 5 mm, apex acuminate, adaxial teeth longer. Corolla red or purple, 2.5–4 cm, pubescent; tube straight or slightly curved, gradually dilated beyond middle; upper lip straight, oblure, apex emarginate; middle lobe of lower lip flabellate, apex emarginate, pilose; lateral lobes oblong, ca. 1/2 as long as middle lobe. Nutlets ovoid-oblong, adaxially slightly triquetrous, densely pubescent, base small umbonate. Fl. May-Jul, fr. Jul-Aug.

- Forested hillsides. Guizhou.