

1. SESAMUM Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 634. 1753.

胡麻属 hu ma shu

Plants terrestrial, annual or perennial herbs, rarely shrubs. Leaves entire or digitate. Flowers solitary. Pedicel short. Calyx deciduous or persistent. Corolla white, pink, to purple, obliquely campanulate, obscurely bilabiate; lowest lobe longest. Disc glandular. Ovary 2-locular, divided by a false septum almost to apex. Ovules numerous, uniseriate in each locule. Fruit a longitudinally dehiscent capsule, oblong to obconical, 4-sulcate, beaked. Seeds obovate, compressed, winged, fringed, or rarely smooth; testa smooth or rugose.

Twenty-one species: primarily in Africa, India, and Sri Lanka; one species in China.

1. Sesamum indicum Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 634. 1753.

芝麻 zhi ma

Sesamum orientale Linnaeus.

Herbs annual, erect, to 1.2 m tall. Stems branched or unbranched, 4-angled, finely pubescent to glabrescent. Leaves opposite or alternate; petiole 3–11 cm on lower leaves; leaf blade lanceolate to ovate, variously 3-parted, 4–20 × 2–10 cm; upper stem leaves oblong to linear-lanceolate, 0.5–2.5 cm wide, base cuneate, margin entire. Flowers white, pink, or mauve-pink with darker markings. Calyx persistent. Corolla 1.5–3.3 cm. Capsule narrowly oblong, rounded at base, 1.5–3 cm × 6–7 mm; beak broad, short. Seeds horizontally arranged, double fringe conspicuous; testa white, brown, or black when ripe, smooth. $2n = 26^*$.

Widely cultivated in China as a crop for seed oil; origin uncertain, cultivated worldwide, especially in tropical countries.