
Herbs, evergreen, aromatic. Stem creeping, erect or ascending. Leaves long petiolate; petiole sheathing up to halfway, usually longer than leaf blade, frequently distinctly articulate ca. halfway along; leaf blade oblong, elliptic, lanceolate, deltoid, or sagittate, thinly to rather stiffly leathery, base usually cordate, apex acuminate usually with tubular tip; primary veins all diverging from midrib, with rather few basal, secondary veins striate, tertiary veins often numerous and very much thinner, all veins straight over most of their length, only near apex arcing into a submarginal vein. Inflorescences usually several together. Spathe persistent, often constricted. Spadix elongate; stipe very short or absent; female flowers usually each with an associated staminode; distal male zone usually separated from female zone by a ring of staminodes, very rarely a naked or near naked interstice; flowers unisexual, naked; female flowers: ovary incompletely 2–5-loculed with parietal and axile (very rarely basal) placentation, ovules numerous, semianatropous with long, slender funicle, style minute, stigma sessile or terminating a minute style, disciform or lobed; sterile flowers sometimes present at base of male axis of spadix; male flowers (fertile) consisting of 2–6 stamens, thecae extrorsely dehiscent by a slit, connective broad or narrow. Berry few or many seeded. Seeds on a long funicle, longitudinally striate, ovoid-lageniform.

About 110 species: tropical America and Asia; four species (two endemic) in China.


The problems presented by a lack of reliable taxonomy are compounded by the poor state of preservation of many of the historical types; the cryptic nature of most of the systematically significant morphologies, notably the presence, absence, and disposition of sterile flowers; the generally large and complex vegetative structures that do not lend themselves readily to traditional herbarium vouchering methodologies; and the fleeting anthesis period such that even well-prepared herbarium specimens are frequently taxonomically useless because inflorescences were prepared post-anthesis, by which time many significant structures had deliquesced or been subject to pre-preservation damage by the most frequent inflorescence visitors, chrysomelid beetles, and post-preservation destruction by herbarium beetles.

Homalomena is a taxonomically complex group and, notwithstanding the above difficulties, is in urgent need of a rigorous study aimed at resolving the taxonomy and phylogeny. This is imperative not only because Homalomena is one of the most abundant, speciose, and least well understood of the mesophytic aroid genera in tropical Asia, but also because the genus is now becoming the focus of interest for pharmaceutical research due to the terpenoids and flavonoids occurring in the plant tissues; such studies must have a basis in sound taxonomic understanding or they risk being futile.

1a. Leaf blade rounded at base, ovate, ca. 18 × 12 cm.
   2a. Inflorescences 1 or 2 together; staminode equaling associated pistil ................................................................. 1. H. aromatica
   2b. Inflorescences up to 6 together; staminode exceeding associated pistil ................................................................. 4. H. hainanensis

1b. Leaf blade sagittate at base.
   3a. Spadix ca. 3.5 cm × 4–6 mm ............................................................................................................................... 2. H. occulta
   3b. Spadix 4–5 cm × ca. 12 mm ............................................................................................................................... 3. H. kelungensis


Herbs somewhat robust, stemless to decumbent, to 60 cm tall, smelling of camphor. Stem initially erect, later decumbent, 1–3 cm in diam. Leaves several together; petiole pale to mid-green with slightly darker longitudinal streaks, to 35 cm; petiolar sheath persistent, 4–7 cm, margins membranous; leaf blade mid-green, drying distinctly pale green, ovate-sagittate to elliptic-sagittate or lanceolate-sagittate, 20–30 × 10–17 cm, thinly leathery, base sagittate, sinus broad, ca. 5 cm, apex acute to long acuminate, with a tubular mucro ca. 2 mm; venation variously differentiated, posterior costae with 4–6 primary lateral veins arising ± simultaneously, anterior costa with 4–6 primary lateral veins and a similar number of virtually indis-
tanguishable interprimary veins diverging from midrib at 45°, secondary venation striate. Inflorescences 1 or 2 together; peduncle erect (developing and floral) to declinate (post-anthesis and fruiting), colored as petiole, 10–18 cm. Spathe oblong, 8–10 cm; limb gaping at anthesis, then closing again. Spadix tapering cylindric, 7–9 cm, subequaling spathe, stipitate; spadix obtuse, 2–3 cm, apex acute. Spadix olivaceous-green, 4–5 × ca. 1.2 cm; male zone ca. 1.2 × 1.2 cm; ovary ovoid; ovules numerous; stigma subside; stamens clavate; male zone ca. 1.3 cm, obtuse; stamens flat, 1.5 mm. Fl. Mar.

N Taiwan (Jilong).


海南千年健 hai nan qian nian jian

Stem erect, ca. 40 cm tall, ca. 1.2 cm in diam. Petiole ca. 46 cm, basal 10–12 cm sheathing; leaf blade broadly ovate, ca. 33 × 25 cm, membranous, base sagittate-cordate, margin entire, apex triangular-acute; veins almost parallel. Peduncle ca. 35 cm. Spathe pale green, ca. 6 cm, apex acute. Spadix cylindric, 4–5 × ca. 1.2 cm; female zone ca. 1.2 × 1.2 cm; ovary obovoid, 2–2.5 mm, obtuse; staminodes clavate; male zone ca. 3 × 1.3 cm, obtuse; stamens flat, 1.5 mm. Fl. Oct.

● Open forests on mountains. Hainan.

Homalomena hainanensis differs from other Chinese species in its leaf blade base broadly rounded (not cordate), spathe small (ca. 3.5 cm), spadix shorter (ca. 2.5 cm), and male zone clavate (ca. 2 cm).