

## 7. AGAVE Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 323. 1753.

龙舌兰属 long she lan shu

Plants perennial or monocarpic. Stems very short or indistinct. Leaves in a basal rosette, large, stout, leathery-fleshy or somewhat woody, containing many fibers, margin usually spiny, rarely entire, apex tipped with a spine. Flowering stems branched or simple, tall, stout. Inflorescence terminal, a spike or panicle, mostly very large. Perianth tube short; lobes narrow, subequal. Stamens inserted at throat or in tube of perianth; filament filiform, usually longer than perianth; anther versatile. Ovary with many ovules. Style slender; stigma 3-lobed. Fruit a capsule, oblong, 3-valved, loculicidal. Seeds numerous, black, thin, flattened.

About 200 species: arid and semiarid regions of the W hemisphere; two species (introduced) in China.

*Agave* is often placed in a distinct family, the Agavaceae. Recent molecular research suggests that *Hosta* Trattinnick is quite closely related.

Additional species of *Agave*, e.g., *A. angustifolia* Haworth and *A. cantala* Roxburgh, are cultivated as garden plants in China but are not described in this account.

- 1a. Leaves usually 200–250, apex straight ..... 1. *A. sisalana*  
1b. Leaves usually 30–40, apex recurved ..... 2. *A. americana*

**1. *Agave sisalana*** Perrine ex Engelmann, Trans. Acad. Sci. St. Louis 3: 314. 1875.

剑麻 jian ma

Stems short, thick. Leaves usually 200–250, in a basal rosette before inflorescence develops, glaucous when young, later dark blue-green, ensiform, straight, usually 1–1.5 m × 10–15 cm, fleshy, adaxially concave, abaxially convex, margin not spiny or rarely spiny, apex straight and tipped with a red-brown spine 2–3 cm. Panicle to 6 m, stout, usually bearing bulblets after anthesis. Flowers with a strong smell; pedicel 5–10 mm. Perianth yellowish green; tube 1.5–2.5 cm; lobes obovate-oblong, 1.2–2 × 0.6–0.8 cm. Stamens inserted at base of perianth lobes; filament yellow, 6–8 cm; anther ca. 2.5 cm. Ovary oblong, ca. 3 cm. Style slender, 6–7 cm; stigma slightly capitate. Capsule oblong, ca. 6 × 2–2.5 cm.

Widely cultivated. S China [native to Mexico].

The leaves are used as a source of fiber.

**2. *Agave americana*** Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 323. 1753.

龙舌兰 long she lan

Stems indistinct. Leaves usually 30–40 or more, in a massive basal rosette, oblanceolate, 1–2 m × 15–20 cm, fleshy, margin spiny, apex recurved and tipped with a dark brown spine 1.5–2.5 cm. Panicle many branched, 6–12 m, usually bearing few bulblets after anthesis. Perianth greenish yellow; tube ca. 1.2 cm; lobes 2.5–3 cm. Stamens ca. 2 × as long as perianth. Capsule oblong, ca. 5 cm.

Widely cultivated. Naturalized in S China [native to tropical America].

The leaves are used medicinally and as a source of fiber.

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