

29. ALOE Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 319. 1753.

芦荟属 *lu hui shu*

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Herbs, shrubs, or trees, usually with dense rosettes of very fleshy leaves. Stems often very reduced but sometimes well developed or even with secondary thickening. Leaves rosulate, amplexicaul, thick, succulent, always glabrous, margin mostly hard dentate or spiny, apex sharply pointed. Inflorescence a subterminal, ascending to erect raceme, often branched; peduncle usually well developed; bracts persistent, scarious. Pedicel usually much shorter than perianth. Perianth usually red, orange, or yellow, rarely greenish or whitish, cylindric to 3-sided, sometimes slightly curved or with swollen base; segments usually connate to form a tube, very rarely nearly free, usually glabrous, apex spreading. Stamens 6, inserted at base of perianth tube, usually exerted; filaments subulate; anthers dorsifixed. Ovary 3-loculed; ovules many per locule. Style filiform; stigma small. Fruit a loculicidal capsule. Seeds 3-angled or flattened, often winged.

Between 350 and 400 species: S and tropical Africa (including Madagascar), tropical Arabia; one species (introduced) in China.

1. Aloe vera (Linnaeus) N. L. Burman, Fl. Indica, 83. 1768.

芦荟 *lu hui*

Aloe perfoliata Linnaeus var. *vera* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 320. 1753; *A. barbadensis* Miller var. *chinensis* Haworth; *A. chinensis* (Haworth) Baker; *A. vera* var. *chinensis* (Haworth) A. Berger.

Herbs succulent. Stems short, suckering freely to form dense clumps. Leaves sub-basal, slightly distichous in seedlings and new shoots, erect, pale green, sometimes with pale spots in very young plants, linear-lanceolate, 15–35(–50) × 4–5(–7) cm, margin sparsely spiny-dentate, apex 2- or 3-dentate-pointed. Inflorescence erect, 60–90 cm; peduncle to 2 cm thick; raceme 30–40 × 5–6 cm, sometimes with 1 or 2 ascending branches, numerous flowered; bracts whitish, broadly lanceolate, ca. 10 × 5–6 mm, veins 5–7, apex acute. Flowers reflexed; pedicel ca. 1/2 as long as bract. Perianth pale yellow mottled with red, slightly ventricose, 2.5(–3) cm, outer lobes free for ca. 1.8 cm, slightly recurved at apex. Stamens exerted by 4–5 mm. Style conspicuously exerted. $2n = 14^*$.

Cultivated for medicinal uses, and perhaps naturalized in the hot, dry Yuan Jiang valley in S Yunnan [probably originated in Mediterranean region; widely cultivated and occasionally naturalized elsewhere].

Chinese material is smaller in all parts than typical *Aloe vera*, but not strikingly so, and there does not seem adequate reason to treat it as anything other than a cultivar of the very widely grown species. The origins of *A. vera* are obscured by the long history of cultivation and the absence of definite wild populations. *Aloe indica* Royle (Ill. Bot. Himal. Mts. 1: 390. 1840), from N India, Nepal, and Thailand, is closely related, apparently differing only in having reddish flowers. Flower color is variable in many species of *Aloe* and it is likely that this species is conspecific with *A. vera*. All other related taxa are native to NE tropical Africa and Arabia.

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