
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 dehiscing 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.

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*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. $2n = 26^k$.

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