
42. DRACAENA Vandelli ex Linnaeus, Syst. Nat., ed. 12, 2: 229, 246. 1767;
Mant. Pl. 1: 9, 63. 1767.

剑叶龙血树 long xue shu shu
Chen Xinqi (陈心启 Chen Sing-chi); Nicholas J. Turland

Pleomele Salisbury.

Plants treelike, shrubby, or subshrubby. Stems simple or branched, ± woody. Leaves crowded toward apex of stems, base completely covering internode; internodes much shorter than wide; flowers in clusters of 2–7, perianth 6–8 mm.

1a. Plants treelike, 3–15 m tall; leaves crowded toward apex of stems, base completely covering internode; internodes much shorter than wide; flowers in clusters of 2–7, perianth 6–8 mm. 1. Dracaena cochinchinensis

2b. Branches not reddish apically; leaves not reddish basally; inflorescence rachis glabrous or subglabrous; pedicels 3–4 mm, articulate above middle ............................................................. 5. D. hokouensis

3b. Leaves distinctly petiolate, petiole 1–8 cm, leaf blade linear-lanceolate to elliptic or broadly obovate. 4a. Leaf blade linear-lanceolate or narrowly elliptic-lanceolate, 10–15 × 2–3 cm; base of petiole neither enlarged nor sheathing internode ................................................................. 4. D. elliptica

4b. Leaf blade elliptic-lanceolate, elliptic, or broadly obovate, 20–40 × 6–8 cm; base of petiole enlarged and sheathing internode. 5a. Plants subshrubby, less than 1 m tall; inflorescence simple, ca. 15 cm; pedicels 3–4 mm, articulate above middle ................................................................. 6. D. terniflora

5b. Plants subshrubby, less than 1 m tall; inflorescence branched, 30–60 cm; pedicels 8–10 mm, articulate at middle ........................................................................................................ 5. D. hokouensis

6a. Leaf blade linear-lanceolate or narrowly elliptic-lanceolate, 10–15 × 2–3 cm; base of petiole neither enlarged nor sheathing internode ....................................................................................................................... 4. D. elliptica

4b. Leaf blade elliptic-lanceolate, elliptic, or broadly obovate, 20–40 × 6–8 cm; base of petiole enlarged and sheathing internode. 5a. Plants subshrubby, less than 1 m tall; inflorescence simple, ca. 15 cm; pedicels 3–4 mm, articulate above middle ................................................................. 6. D. terniflora


剑叶龙血树 jian ye long xue shu

Aletris cochinchinensis Loureiro, Fl. Cochinch. 1: 204. 1790; Dracaena loureiroi Gagnepain, nom. illeg. (included A. cochinchinensis); Pleomele cochinchinensis (Loureiro) Merrill.

Plants treelike, 5–15 m tall. Stems branched, sometimes to 1 m thick, reddish apically; internodes much shorter than wide; bark grayish white, becoming grayish brown with age. Leaves crowded at apex of branches, sessile, sword-shaped, 30–100 × 2–5 cm, leathery, base reddish, completely covering internode. Inflorescence terminal, branched, more than 40 cm; rachis densely papillose-pubescent. Flowers in clusters of 2–5; pedicel 3–6 mm, articulate distally. Perianth milky white, 6–8 mm; tube 1.5–2 mm; lobes 5–6 mm. Filaments flat, 0.5–0.7 mm wide, reddish brown tuberculculate distally. Berry orange, subglobose, 0.8–1.2 cm in diam., 1–3-seeded. Fl. Mar. fr. Jul–Aug.

Limestone slopes; 900–1700 m. SW Guangxi, S Yunnan [Cambodia, Vietnam].

There is a nomenclatural problem with the treelike Chinese plants known under this name. The neotype specimen of Aletris cochinchinensis (J. & M. S. Clemens 4048, designated by Bos in Agric. Univ. Wageningen Papers 84: 121. 1984) was said to be at P with duplicates at BM, K, and MO, but, after searching each herbarium, only the sheet at BM could be found. This appears to be a specimen of the shrubby species traditionally known as Dracaena angustifolia, which should therefore take the name D. cochinchinensis, leaving the treelike Chinese plants possibly without a name unless they are conspecific with D. cambodiana, which is very similar morphologically (see below). The specimen does not conflict with Loureiro’s protologue. Rejection of the name A. cochinchinensis would maintain the traditional and current application of D. angustifolia. Alternatively, conservation of A. cochin-
Dracaena cochinchinensis with a conserved type could additionally preserve its usage in the sense of the treelike Chinese plants.

The dried resin, called xue jie (血竭) or dragon’s blood, is used medicinally. The collection of this resin, together with habitat destruction, has made Dracaena cochinchinensis a vulnerable species in China.


柬埔寨龙血树 jian pu zhai long xue shu

Dracaena cambodiaca (Pierre ex Gagnepain) Merrill & Chun.

Plants treelike, 3–4(–10) m tall. Stems usually branched, not reddish apically; internodes much shorter than wide; bark grayish brown. Leaves crowded at apex of branches, sessile, sword-shaped, 60–70 × 1.5–3 cm, leathery, base not reddish, completely covering internode. Inflorescence terminal, branched, 30–40 cm; rachis glabrous or subglabrous. Flowers in clusters of 3–7; pedicel 5–7 mm, articulate distally. Perianth greenish white or pale yellow, 6–7 mm; tube 1.2–1.6 mm; lobes 4.5–5 mm. Filaments flat, ca. 0.5 mm wide, not tuberculate. Style slightly shorter than ovary. Berry ca. 1 cm in diam. Fl. Jul.

Forests, dry and sandy soils; near sea level to 300 m. S Hainan [Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam].

Dracaena cambodiaca is very similar morphologically to the species here named D. cochinchinensis, and J. J. Bos (pers. comm.) notes that the two may be conspecific.

The dried resin can be used medicinally as a substitute for that of Dracaena cochinchinensis.


长花龙血树 chang hua long xue shu

Pleomele angustifolia (Roxburgh) N. E. Brown.

Plants shrubby, rhizomatous, 1–3 m tall. Stems simple or few branched; internodes often longer than wide; bark grayish, smooth. Leaves spaced along distal part of stems, subsessile or indistinctly petiolate; petiole to 1 cm, base not completely covering internode; leaf blade nearly sword-shaped to linear-lanceolate, 20–30 × 6–8 cm. Inflorescence terminal, branched, 30–50 cm; rachis glabrous. Flowers in clusters of 2 or 3; pedicel 7–8 mm, articulate distally or near apex. Perianth greenish white or pale yellow, 6–7 mm; tube 1.2–1.6 mm; lobes 1.1–1.6 cm. Filaments flat, ca. 0.5 mm wide, not tuberculate. Style slightly shorter than ovary. Berry ca. 1 cm in diam. Fl. Jul.

Forests, dry and sandy soils; near sea level to 300 m. S Hainan [Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam].

Dracaena angustifolia is an illegitimate name (a later homonym). J. J. Bos (pers. comm.) notes that the type specimen of D. elliptica var. gracilis, from Penang, Malaysia, differs from typical D. elliptica only in having somewhat narrower leaves. He believes that the plant should be treated under D. elliptica, but does not support any infraspecific status for it.

4. Dracaena elliptica Thunberg, Dracaena, 6. 1808.

细枝龙血树 xi zhi long xue shu

Dracaena atropurpurea Roxburgh var. gracilis (Baker) Baker; D. elliptica var. gracilis Baker; D. gracilis (Baker) J. D. Hooker (1892), not Salisbury (1796, nom. illeg., included D. marginata Lamarrk).

Plants shrubby, 1–5 m tall. Stems branched; internodes longer than wide. Leaves spaced along distal part of branches, distinctly petiolate; petiole ca. 1 cm, base neither enlarged nor covering internode; leaf blade linear-lanceolate or narrowly elliptic-lanceolate, 10–15 × 2–3 cm, midvein distinct. Inflorescence terminal, branched, 7–10 cm; rachis glabrous. Flowers solitary, rarely paired; pedicel ca. 10 mm, articulate above middle. Perianth greenish, sometimes flushed red or purple, 2–2.3 cm.

S Guangxi [Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam].

Chinese plants were treated in FRPS as Dracaena gracilis, which is an illegitimate name (a later homonym). J. J. Bos (pers. comm.) notes that the type specimen of D. elliptica var. gracilis, from Penang, Malaysia, differs from typical D. elliptica only in having somewhat narrower leaves. He believes that the plant should be treated under D. elliptica, but does not support any infraspecific status for it.


河口龙血树 he kou long xue shu

Plants shrubby, to 5 m tall. Stems simple; internodes often longer than wide. Leaves spaced along distal part of stem, distinctly petiolate; petiole 4–8 cm, base neither enlarged nor covering internode; leaf blade elliptic-lanceolate or broadly obovate-lanceolate, 20–45 × 1.5–5.5 cm. Inflorescence terminal, branched, 30–50 cm; rachis glabrous. Flowers in clusters of 2–4; pedicel 8–10 mm, articulate at middle. Perianth white, 1.8–2 cm; tube ca. 8 mm; lobes 1.1–1.2 cm. Filaments filiform; anthers ca. 2 mm. Style filiform, much longer than ovary. Berry orange, globose, 1.5–2 cm in diam., 3-furrowed. Fl. Apr–May, fr. Sep–Nov.

Forests, bamboo forests, hillsides along valleys; 100–700 m. S Guangxi, SE Yunnan [Thailand, Vietnam].

Dracaena hokouensis was compared in the protologue with D. helleriana Wallich ex Kurz, described from Myanmar, and is also similar to D. spicata Roxburgh, described from cultivated plants originating from Chittagong, Bangladesh, except that the latter species has subsessile flowers.


矮龙血树 ai long xue shu

Plants subshrubby, less than 1 m tall. Stems somewhat sprawling, simple or few branched; internodes often longer than wide. Leaves spaced along distal part of stem, distinctly petiolate; petiole 3–6 cm, distinctly widened at base to form a persistent sheath normally concealing internode; leaf blade elliptic-lanceolate or elliptic, 20–30 × 6–8 cm. Inflorescence terminal,
simple, ca. 15 cm; rachis glabrous. Flowers solitary or in clusters of 2 or 3; pedicel 3–4 mm, articulate above middle. Perianth white, (1.4–)1.8–2.2 cm. Berry globose, 1–1.3 cm in diam., 1–3-seeded. Fr. Aug. 2n = 80.

Dense forests; 1000–1100 m. SW Yunnan (Jinghong Xian) [Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Thailand].

There may be a nomenclatural problem with the Chinese plants known under this name. The only locality mentioned in the protologue is Sylhet in Bangladesh. The gathering Wallich 5147A (BM, K), labeled D. terniflora and from Sylhet, is original material for the name but clearly belongs to the species traditionally known as D. elliptica. If one of these specimens were designated as the lectotype of D. terniflora, that name would fall into the synonymy of D. elliptica, leaving the Chinese plants without a name. However, it is possible that these Chinese plants are less robust individuals of D. hokouensis, characterized by smaller stature, simple inflorescence, and shorter pedicels. Further collections are needed to ascertain their true identity.