

# GUIDE TO THE GENERA OF LIANAS AND CLIMBING PLANTS IN THE NEOTROPICS

## CORIARIACEAE

By Pedro Acevedo-Rodríguez (Aug 2020)



*Coriaria ruscifolia* L., photo by Dick Culbert

A family of warm temperate areas with disjunct distribution in parts of the Mediterranean, Pakistan to Japan, New Guinea, New Zealand, and Mexico to southern South America, containing a single genus with about 15 species of trees or shrubs, of which a single species is a scrambling shrub or vine, with disjunct distribution from Mexico south through Central America,

Colombia to Peru, Chile and Argentina, a pioneer species in secondary plant formations between 900-3600 m elevations.

**Diagnosics:** Scrambling vines with quadrangular stems, with opposite short lateral branches bearing opposite, distichous, nearly sessile, simple leaves, and long racemes.

### General Characters

1. **STEMS.** Weak quadrangular, with scanty secondary growth, reaching 2-5 m in length and about 1 cm wide at base; cross sections with large medulla and xylem dissected by numerous wide rays.
2. **EXUDATES.** No visible exudate.
3. **CLIMBING MECHANISMS.** Scrambling vines, with short, opposite lateral branches.
4. **LEAVES.** Opposite, chartaceous to subcoriaceous, simple, entire, elliptic, with 3 main veins from base; petioles very short, glandless; stipules minute, caducous.
5. **INFLORESCENCE.** Long, axillary racemes.
6. **PEDICELS.** Longer than the perianth.
7. **FLOWERS.** Bisexual, actinomorphic; calyx of 5 free, imbricate sepals; petals 5, shorter than the sepals, becoming fleshy and persistent in fruit; stamens 10, the filaments free; ovary superior, carpels 5-10, distinct but fused at the base, styles as numerous as carpels, with stigmatic surface on distal portion.
8. **FRUIT.** Achenes, free, 5, covered by the persistent purplish, fleshy petals.

## GENERIC DESCRIPTION

**CORIARIA** Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1037. 1753.



*Coriaria ruscifolia* L., photo by Dick Culbert

Erect or scandent shrub. Stems with scanty secondary growth reaching about 1 cm wide, and up to 15 m in length; cross section quadrangular, with regular anatomy, large medulla, xylem dissected by numerous, wide rays; bark is relatively smooth, with numerous small, lenticels. Leaves opposite, simple, distichous; petioles very short.

Inflorescences of axillary racemes or terminal on short lateral branches, commonly with reddish axis; bracts minute, persistent. Calyx of 5 free sepals; corolla of 5 petals, persistent and becoming fleshy in fruit; stamens 5; carpels 5, nearly free. Fruits of 5 achenes per flower, covered by the persistent, fleshy, purple petals.

**Distinctive features:** Scrambling vine with opposite, nearly sessile leaves and long, hanging axillary racemes.

**Distribution:** A genus of 15 species, with only one species in the Neotropics, which commonly grows as a scrambling vine, distributed from Mexico to Chile with disjunct distribution in secondary plant formations between 900-2600 m elevations.

#### **RELEVANT LITERATURE**

González, F. 2004 Coriariaceae. In: N. Smith, et al. (eds.). Flowering plants of the Neotropics. Princeton University Press. N.J., U.S.A.