A small pantropical family of trees, shrubs or lianas, with 4 genera and about 73 species. Climbers are found in the Old World genus *Illigera* Bl. with 28 species and the neotropical genus *Sparattanthelium* Mart. with about 12 species. The latter is found in continental tropical America from Mexico to central-eastern Brazil, occurring in moist, non-flooded forests scrubbs at low elevations.

**Diagnostics:** Scrambling lianas with long hanging branches, leaves alternate, simple, 3-veined from base and with entire margins; stem cross sections simple, undescriptive, with conspicuous rays. Vegetatively similar to species of Menispermaceae but petioles not pulvinate, also similar to *Ampelozizyphus* (Rhamnaceae) but distinguished by the leaves with ranalian smell.
General Characters

1. STEMS. Woody with moderate secondary growth, cylindrical (fig. 1c, c, d), 5-10 m long and 2-6 cm in diam.; cross sections with regular vascular anatomy, rather indistinctive, with a large medulla and conspicuous rays (fig. 1c, d); bark smooth, greenish gray (fig. 1b).

2. EXUDATES. Watery or no visible exudates.

3. CLIMBING MECHANISMS. Scramblers (fig. 1a) aided by recurved inflorescence axes (fig. 3b), sometimes remaining as woody hooks.

4. LEAVES. Alternate, simple, 3-veined from base and entire margins (fig. 2a, b), chartaceous to coriaceous; exstipulate; petioles short, glandless, nearly cylindrical (fig. 2b).

5. INFLORESCENCE. Axillary, dichasial cymes, often with twisted axes.

6. FLOWERS. Bisexual, actinomorphic (unisexual or zygomorphic in non-climbing genera); calyx of 4-5 free sepals; corolla absent; stamens 4-5, opposite the sepals, of similar length, the anthers opening by longitudinal valves; ovary inferior unilocular, with a single pendent ovule, the style stout, the stigma capitate.

7. FRUIT. A dry ellipsoid, smooth or costate drupe.

GENERIC DESCRIPTION

SPARATTANTHELIUM Martius, Flora 24 (2, Beibl.): 40. 1841.

Unarmed crambling lianas with long hanging branches or sometimes shrubs or small trees, reaching 5-10 m in length. Stems glabrous or pubescent, slightly angled or cylindrical, unarmed, reaching 2-6 cm in diam.; bark blackish or grayish green, smooth or lineate. Leaves alternate, chartaceous to coriaceous, elliptic, oblong to nearly oblanceolate, with three main veins from base, the apex short-acuminate or acuminate, the base rounded, obtuse or truncate, the margins entire; petioles 1-3 cm long, cylindrical, non-pulvinate. Inflorescence axillary dichasial
cymes. Flowers whitish, bisexual; hypanthium conical, similar in color to the calyx; sepals free, 4-5, commonly pubescent; stamens shorter than the opposite sepals; corolla absent; ovary inferior, unilocular, with a single pendulous ovule, the style stout, terminal, the stigma capitate. Drupe dry, ovoid or ellipsoid, 5-costate-angled, 1-1.5 cm long, commonly glaucous at maturity; seed one, with convoluted, folded cotyledons.

**Distinctive features:** Scrambling unarmed lianas; leaves alternate, stipulate, simple, with entire margins and 3-veined from base, sometimes with *ranalian* smell; petioles non-pulvinate, cylindrical; inflorescence axes twisted and prehensile. Similar to *Ampelozizyphus* (Rhamnaceae), but this genus does not have a *ranalian* smell and have elongated paniculate inflorescences with greenish flowers.

**Distribution:** A neotropical genus of 12 species distributed from Mexico to south and eastern Brazil in lowland, moist, non-flooded forests.
Figure 1. A Scrambling habit with lateral hanging branches of *Sparattanthelium* sp. B. Smooth, grayish green bark of *Sparattanthelium* sp. C. Cross section of mature stem (fresh) of *Sparattanthelium* sp. with conspicuous rays and large vessels. D. Cross section of young stem (dried), of *Sparattanthelium amazonum* with large angular medulla and disperse xylem parenchyma. Photos by P. Acevedo.
Figure 2. A. Trinerved leaf of *Sparattanthelium* sp. B. Unarmed branch of *Sparattanthelium* sp. Photos by P. Acevedo.
Figure 3. A. Inflorescence of *Sparattanthelium amazonum*. B. Infructescence with twisted, prehensile axes of *Sparattanthelium amazonum*. Photos by P. Acevedo.
RELEVANT LITERATURE


PICTURE VOUCHERS

Figure 1.
A-C. *Sparattanthelium sp.* (Acevedo 17024).
D. *Sparattanthelium amazonum* Mart. (Acevedo 15082).

Figure 2.
A-B. *Sparattanthelium sp.* (Acevedo 17024).

Figure 3.
A-B. *Sparattanthelium amazonum* Mart. (Acevedo 15082).