

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

SALICACEAE

By Pedro Acevedo-Rodríguez (Aug 2020)

A cosmopolitan family of trees and shrubs with 54 genera and about 1,200 species, not commonly associated with lianas. However, the neotropical species *Casearia aculeata* Jacq. in addition to being a tree or a shrub, occurs as a liana frequently enough to be included in this work. Since Salicaceae is a morphologically diverse family no attempt will be made here to provide a description of the family, instead, the current treatment is solely based on the description of climbing individuals in *C. aculeata*.

General Characters

1. STEMS. Woody, reaching ca. 10 m in length and about 3 cm in diam., cylindrical, rigid, and often with spines; cross section with *regular* anatomy forming a continuous vascular cylinder traversed by numerous narrow rays.
2. EXUDATES. No visible exudate.
3. CLIMBING MECHANISM. Scrambler, with short plageotropic branches, often with short brachyblasts that end on a sharp spine, that help in clinging on to host plants.
4. LEAVES. Leaves are simple, alternate, distichous, chartaceous, with serrate margins, and pinnate venation; petioles short, glandless; stipules inconspicuous, caducous.
5. INFLORESCENCES. Axillary, fascicles.

6. FLOWERS. Actinomorphic, bisexual; pedicelled; sepals 5, free, light greenish yellow; petals absent; stamens 8, of equal length, filaments free, alternating with the disc lobes; ovary superior, unilocular, tricarpellate, ovules numerous, with parietal placentation, style terminal, stigma capitate.
7. FRUITS. A fleshy, trivalved capsule.
8. SEEDS. Seeds numerous, small, covered with an orange pulp.



Figure 1. *Casearia aculeata*. **A.** Flowering branch. **B.** Fruiting branch. Photos by P. Acevedo.

GENERIC DESCRIPTION

CASEARIA Jacquin, Enum. Syst. Pl. 4, 21. 1760.



C. aculeata, photo from Stevenson 1384 (US)

gynoecium green. Fruit a trivalved capsule, green to reddish at maturity, with numerous small seeds embedded in orange pulp.

Distinctive features: A scrambling liana armed with straight spines; leaves alternate, simple with serrate margins and scattered translucent linear cystoliths.

Small tree, shrub or scrambling liana. Main stem cylindrical, armed with simple spines (derived from brachyblasts); secondary branches also bearing numerous axillary brachyblasts that end on a sharp spine. Leaves alternate, distichous, elliptic to oblanceolate, pinnately veined, with serrate margins and linear, translucent cystoliths over the lamina; petioles short. Flowers in axillary clusters, cream to light yellowish green; sepals ovate; stamens 8, with white filaments and yellow anthers;



Stem cross section in *C. aculeata*, photo by P. Acevedo

Distribution: *Casearia* is a pantropical genus of trees and shrubs with more than 200 species, of which only the widely neotropical *C. aculeata* sometimes grows as a liana; found in dry or moist forests, and bordering savannas at low elevations.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Sleumer, H.O. 1980. Flacourtiaceae. Fl. Neotrop. Monogr. 22: 1-499.

IMAGE VOUCHERS

Figure 1.

A. *Casearia aculeata* Jacq. (Acevedo 16732)

B. *Casearia aculeata* Jacq. (Acevedo 14969)