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.

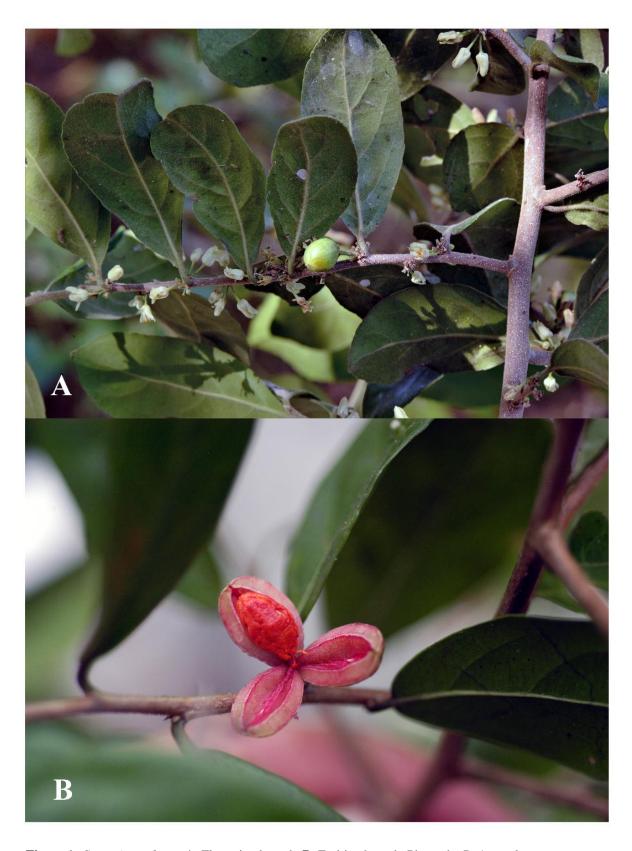


Figure 1. Casearia aculeata. A. Flowering branch. B. Fruiting branch. Photos by P. Acevedo.

GENERIC DESCRITION

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



C. aculeata, photo from Stevenson 1384 (US)

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

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.

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)