

BIXACEAE

by

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Trees or shrubs containing a reddish juice. Leaves alternate, simple, palmately-veined. Stipules small, deciduous. Inflorescence consisting of terminal panicles. Flowers hermaphrodite, actinomorphic, large. Pedicels with 5 glands below the calyx. Sepals 5, free, imbricate, deciduous. Petals 5, free, imbricate. Stamens numerous, inserted on an annular, hypogynous disk; filaments free or slightly connate at the base; anthers 2-celled, horseshoe-shaped, passing over the top of the filaments, with the arms united at the back, opening at the apex by two short slits which at length become an apical pore. Ovary superior, 2-carpelled, 1-celled or falsely 2-celled by placental intrusion; style one, terminal; stigma shortly 2-lobed. Ovules numerous on two parietal placentas, anatropous. Fruit a capsule, one-celled, bi-valved and densely covered with spines; valves thick, with the placentas in the middle-line. Seeds numerous; testa fleshy. Endosperm copious. Embryo large, straight.

Two species in one genus in tropical America.

Bixa Linnaeus, Spec. Plant. 512. 1753

Characters of the family.

Bixa orellana L.

LINNAEUS, Spec. Plant. 512. 1753; GRISEBACH, Fl. Br. W. Ind. Isl. 20. 1859; Duss, Fl. phan. Ant. franç. 14. 1897; BOLDINGH, Fl. D. W. Ind. Isl. 1: 135. 1909; JOHNSTON, Proc. Bost. Soc. Nat. Hist. 34(7): 238. 1909; URBAN, Symb. Ant. 4: 415. 1910; BOLDINGH, Fl. Ned. W. Ind. Eil. 288. 1913; URBAN, Symb. Ant. 8: 441. 1920; BRITTON & WILSON, Sci. Surv. Porto Rico & Virgin Isl. 5: 588. 1924; FAWCETT & RENDLE, Fl. Jamaica 5(3): 205, fig. 81. 1926; WILLIAMS, Fl. Trinidad & Tobago 1(2): 38. 1929; ARNOLDO, Gekw. en nutt. pl. Ned. Ant. 29. 1954.

Shrub or small tree, up to 8 m high; branchlets rusty-scaly, glabrescent. Stipules oblong, acute, 6—10 mm long. Leaves petiolate; petiole terete, thickened at apex and base, at first scaly, glabrescent, 4—10 cm long; blade broadly ovate, long-acuminate at the apex, rounded or subcordate at the base, often unequal,

at first densely scaly beneath, glabrescent, red-dotted, 7.5—24 × 4—16 cm, the principal veins prominent beneath. Panicles few- to many-flowered. Bracts deciduous, 5—10 mm long. Pedicels 6 mm long, thickened at the apex; glands sessile, large, alternating with the sepals. Sepals broadly oval to obovate, concave, rounded at the apex, rusty-scaly, 10—12 mm long. Petals unequal, obovate, rounded or retuse at the apex, rose-coloured, 2.5 × 1—1.5 cm. Disk 1 mm high. Filaments 1.2 cm long; anthers 1 mm long. Ovary spiny, about 3 mm long; style thickened upwards, 1—1.5 mm long. Capsule ovoid to globose-ovoid, 3—4 cm long; spines soft, 9 mm long, dark red, becoming greenish and at length brown. Seeds obpyramidal, 4—5 mm long.

Originating from tropical South America and the West Indies; cultivated throughout the tropics.

Vernacular names: rucu, roucu (Leeward Group & Windward Group).

Uses: a dye is prepared from the outer coat of the seeds; it is used for colouring butter, cheese, a.o.

SABA: The Bottom (Boldingh 1850, st. July; 2241, fr. July; Arnoldo 557, fl. & fr. Aug.); lower part of Bottom Hill, 300 m (Boldingh 1426, fr. July).

ST. EUSTATIUS: Oranjestad (Boldingh 533, st. June); without loc. (v. Groll-Meyer 231, fl. & fr.).