

Senna tora (L.) Roxb.

Family:
Fabaceae

Roxburgh, W. (1832) *Flora Indica* (ed. Carey) 2: 340.

Common name:

Java Beans; Senna, Sickle; Sickle Senna; Java Bean; Foetid Cassia; Cassia, Foetid; Stinking Cassia

Stem

Usually flowers and fruits when 50 cm tall but can grow into a shrub about 1 m tall.

Leaves

Stipules narrowly subulate or filiform, about 5-7 mm long, slightly hairy at least towards the apex, venation meagre with only one longitudinal vein normally visible. Leaflet blades about 22-47 x 10-25 mm, the terminal pair the largest. About six leaflets per leaf. Twigs, compound leaf rhachis, petioles and leaflets clothed in short pale tortuous hairs. Awl-shaped glands present on the upper surface of the compound leaf rhachis between the two lower pairs of leaflets. Compound leaf rhachis and petiole grooved on the upper surface.

Flowers

Petals about 9-11 mm long. Stamens usually ten, seven fertile (occasionally ten) usually three large and four slightly smaller, plus three staminodes. Ovary slightly pilose, clothed in appressed hairs.

Fruit

Pods pilose, about 12-18 x 0.2-0.5 cm, circular in transverse section. Seeds about 3-4 x 1.5 mm, at least one end oblique. Cotyledons folded, rolled and contorted.

Seedlings

Cotyledons orbicular, about 12-17 mm diam., petiole short, about 1-1.5 mm long. First pair of leaves pinnate, leaflets four, with a cigar-shaped gland between the two basal leaflets. Stipules about 2 mm long. At the tenth leaf stage: seedlings emit an obnoxious odour when crushed. Leaf pinnate with six leaflets of increasing size towards the apex. Stipules hairy, about 12 mm long. Cigar-shaped glands generally present on the upper surface of the compound leaf rhachis between the basal pair of leaflets, sometimes between other leaflets as well. Seed germination time 4 to 5 days.

Distribution and Ecology

An introduced species, probably originating somewhere in the Asia-Pacific region, now naturalised in NT, CYP, NEQ and CEQ. Altitudinal range from near sea level to about 300 m. Grows as a weed along roads in rain forest areas and as a weed on agricultural land. Also occurs as a weed in Africa.

Natural History & Notes

This species may have medicinal properties.

An unpalatable species of northern coastal pastures, sugar-cane headlands and roadsides. Sometimes toxic to rats in laboratory tests. It has been used for medicinal purposes in SE Asia, also as a coffee substitute. Hacker (1990).

Synonyms

Cassia tora L., *Species Plantarum* 1: 376(1753), Type: *Flora Zeylanica* No. 152, Herb. Herm. 4: 79; lecto: BM. Fide W. Fawcett & A. B. Rendle, *Fl. Jamaica* 4: 106 (1920).

RFK Code

3041



Habit, leaves, flowers and immature fruit. © CSIRO



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



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