AL FAATEH UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SCIENCE
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# FLORA OF LIBYA

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## MENISPERMACEAE

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# MENISPERMACEAE

S.M.H. JAFRI

Dioecious climbers or woody perennials, rarely shrub or tree. Leaves alternate, simple, rarely 3-foliolate, mostly entire, exstipulate. Flowers small, unisexual, 2-3-merous, usually actinomorphic and greenish in various inflorescences. Floral whorls mostly 2-seriate. Sepals (1-) 3-12 (-many), free or connate. Petals (0-) 1-6 (-many), usually free. Male flowers usually with 6 (-9) stamens, sometimes less, usually antipetalous, free or connate; anthers seemingly 4-celled, extrorse, 1-2-locular, opening longitudinally or transversely by slit; pistillode minute or absent. Female flowers mostly with 3-6, (rarely less or several) free, 1-2-ovulate carpels, with parietal placentation; ovule amphitropous; style short, mostly curved, sometimes absent; staminodes present or absent. Fruit a drupe or achene; seed curved, with or without endosperm.

A tropical or subtropical family with c. 67 genera and nearly 400 species; represented by a single genus with one species in Libya.

## COCCULUS

DC., Syst. 1: 515. 1817 (*nom. cons.*)

*Cebatha* Forsk., Fl. Aeg. - Arab. 171. 1775; *Leaeba* Forsk., l.c. 172 *Bricchettia* Pax in Ann. Ist. Bot. Roma 6: 181. 1897.

Dioecious shrubs or climbers, sometimes polygamous. Leaves simple, usually multicostate, petiolate, variable. Flowers axillary, solitary, cymose or paniculate, very small, greenish, 3-merous. Sepals 6, in 2 series, inner larger. Petals 6, shorter than inner sepals. Male flowers with 6-9, free stamens, bearing 4-lobed anthers, dehishing by transverse slits. Female flowers bearing 3 (or 6) carpels and (0-) 6 staminodes; style cylindrical, erect or recurved. Drupes usually 3, laterally compressed, obovoid or spherical, with scar of style near the base; seed horseshoe-shaped, usually tubercled; endosperm scanty; cotyledons linear, appressed.

## MENISPERMACEAE

About 12 species in the tropics and the subtropics of Africa, Asia, Pacific Islands and N. America; represented by the following species here.

**Cocculus pendulus** (J.R. & G. Forst.) Diels in Engler, Pflanzeur. 46: 237. 1910; Quezel & Santa, Nouv. Fl. Alg. 2: 610. 1963; Ozenda, Fl. Sahara (ed. 2): 241. fig. 67 (2). 1977; Tack., St. Fl. Egypt (ed. 2) : 144. fig. 38. 1974; Cufod., Enum. Pl. Aethiop. 113. 1954. (Fig. 1).

*Epibaterium pendulum* J.R. & G. Forst., Char. Gen. 108. t. 54. 1776; *C. leaeba* (Del.) DC., Syst. 1: 529. 1817; *Menispermum leaeba* Del., Fl. Aeg. 284. 1812; *M. edule* Vahl, Symb. Bot. 1: 80. 1790; *M. ellipticum* Poir., Encyc. Suppl. 657. 1813; *Bricchettia somalensis* Pax in Ann. Ist. Bot. Roma 6: 181.1897.

Scandent or climbing shrub with slender, twining puberulent, glaucous branches, up to c. 5 m long. Leaves 10-50 x 5-20 mm, variable in shape, lanceolate-oblong, ovate, trapezoid to 3-lobed or -hastate, obtuse, mucronate or emarginate, short petioled to subsessile, somewhat leathery, venation 3-5-costate at base, puberulent when very young, later glabrous. Flowers small; the males short-pedicelled or sessile, in few-flowered short-peduncled cymes; the females solitary or in pairs on up to c. 10 mm long pedicels. The 3 outer sepals 1-1.5 x 0.5-0.7 mm, the inner 3 larger, puberulous to glabrous. Petals ovate-obovate, 1-2 x 0.5-1 mm. Stamens 0.8-1.5 mm long. Carpels c. 1 mm long. Drupe c. 5 mm across, reddish when fresh but turning black when dried, reniform; seed 1, reniform, tubercled. 2n=26

Type: Cape Verde Is., S. Tiago, *Forster* (BM).

**D-4** Jabal as Sauda, Wadi as Sultan, 17.2.1978, *C. Ricceri & C.H. Steinberg* 279 (ULT).

Distribution: Tropical and subtropical Africa (Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Senegal, Somalia, Libya and Algeria etc.), extending to Asia (Palestine to India and Pakistan).

A desert species usually in stony ground, newly recorded from Libya but rare, adding one more family to our Flora. The plant is used medicinally as diuretic.

*Fl.:* March-June




Fig. 1 **Cocculus pendulus**: A, $A_1$, habit x ½; B, leaf variation x 1½; C, a portion of female plant x 1½; $C_1$, female flower x 25; D, a portion of male plant x 1½; $D_1$, male flower x 25; E, fruit x 4.

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