

## ERYTHROPALACEAE

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Pantropical but predominantly neotropical family, with four genera and ~40 species of trees, treelets or less often scrambling shrubs or lianas. Climbers in the Neotropics belong to the genus *Heisteria*, with two species consistently recorded as lianas. The genus is most diverse in humid forests at low elevations.

**Diagnosics:** Scrambling lianas with cylindrical stems; leaves simple, alternate, distichous, coriaceous with cartilaginous, undulate or entire margins, and pinnate venation; lamina commonly with conspicuous discoloured laticifers; exstipulate; drupes subtended by an accrescent calyx.

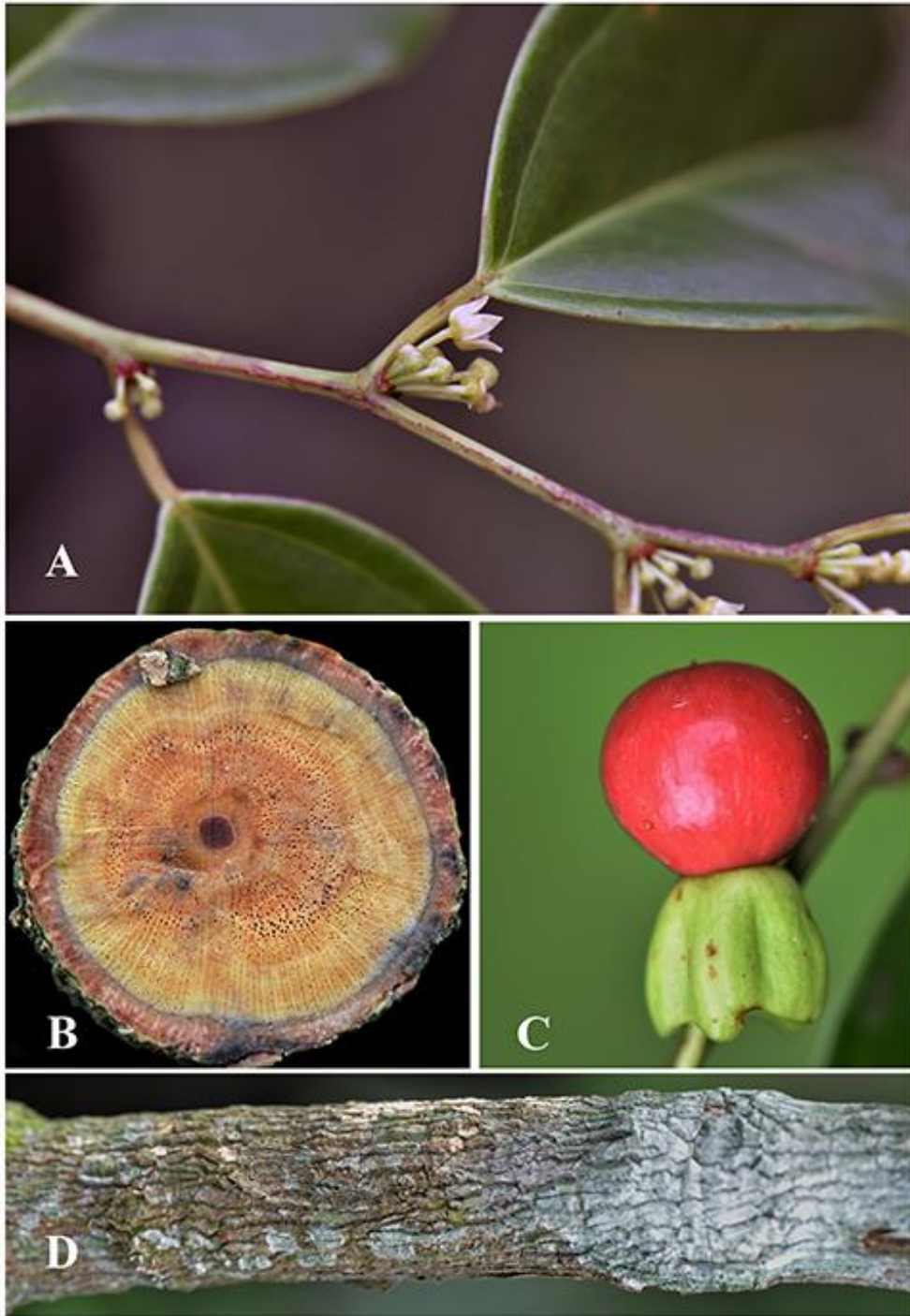
### General Characters

1. STEMS. Slender 3–4 cm in diam., cylindrical; cross section with regular anatomy; xylem, with numerous narrow rays and conspicuous wide vessels (Figure 106B).
2. EXUDATES. Scanty, inconspicuous.
3. CLIMBING MECHANISM. Shrubs with sub twining branches or scrambling lianas.
4. LEAVES. Simple, alternate, with lighter entire margins (Figure 106A), and pinnate venation; petioles ~1 cm long, adaxially canaliculate, glandless; stipules absent.
5. INFLORESCENCES. Axillary few-flowered cymes.
6. FLOWERS. Actinomorphic, bisexual; pedicelled. Calyx minute, 5-dentate, green; petals 5, free, white, ovate-lanceolate, acute, adaxially pubescent; stamens with free filaments, 5 in one series or 10 in two unequal series, the outer stamens adnate to the petals; ovary superior, 10-sulcate at the base, 3-carpellate, unilocular, with a single pendent ovule.

7. FRUITS. A late dehiscent, fleshy drupe, ellipsoid or subglobose, < 1 cm long, maturing red, red-orange or black, subtended by a persistent accrescent, reflexed, calyx (Figure 106C).

## **USES**

According to Paz y Miño (1991), the stems of *Heisteria scandens* Ducke produce drinkable water.



**Figure 106.** *Heisteria scandens*. **A.** Flowering branch, inflorescence in fascicles. **B.** Stem cross section with regular anatomy. **C.** Red, subglobose drupe with persistent, green, accrescent, reflexed calyx. **D.** Stem with fissured, rough bark. Photos by P. Acevedo.

**HEISTERIA** Jacquin, Enum. Syst. Pl. 4. 1760.

Glabrous, trees, treelets, scrambling lianas, or shrubs with weakly twining branches, unarmed, the lianas commonly with lateral spreading branches; stems cylindrical, reaching 5–20 m in length and ~4 cm in diam.; cross sections simple, with regular anatomy, xylem with visibly wide vessels and numerous multiseriate rays (Figure 106B); bark beige-brown, fissured (Figure 106D). Leaves alternate, distichous, simple, coriaceous, with cartilaginous, undulate or entire margins, and pinnate venation, lamina commonly with conspicuous discoloured laticifers; petioles furrowed; exstipulate. Inflorescences of axillary few-flowered cymes. Flowers pedicellate, bisexual, actinomorphic; calyx green, minute, 5-dentate; petals 5, free, white, ovate-lanceolate, adaxially pubescent; stamens 5 or 10 (depending on the species) numerous, the filaments free; ovary superior, 10-sulcate at the base, tricarpellate, unilocular, with a single ovule, the stigmas 3, minute. Fruit a fleshy drupe, ellipsoid to globose, < 1 cm tall, red or black when ripe.

**Distinctive features:** Erect shrubs with scrambling branches or scrambling lianas; leaves alternate, simple, with cartilaginous, undulate or entire margins, and pinnate venation, lamina commonly with conspicuous discoloured laticifers; exstipulate; drupes subtended by an accrescent calyx.

**Distribution:** A genus of ~39 species, 36 of which are distributed in the Neotropics and three in West Tropical Africa. *Heisteria scandens* from Nicaragua to southern Brazil, and *H. pentandra* (Benth. ex Reissek) Engl. in Venezuela and the Brazilian Amazon are consistently reported as climbers; humid, non-flooded, lowland forests.