

# SALICACEAE

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A cosmopolitan family of trees and shrubs with 54 genera and ~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 ~10 m in length and ~3 cm in diam., cylindrical, rigid; 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 plagiotropic 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; pedicellate; 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.

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

Small tree, shrub or scrambling liana. Main stem cylindrical, armed with simple thorns



*Casearia aculeata*, photo by P. Acevedo.

(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; 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 thorns; 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 widespread neotropical *C. aculeata* sometimes grows as a liana; found in dry or moist forests, and bordering savannas at low elevations.

