

Schisandra chinensis (Turcz.) Baill.

Standardized Common Name: Schisandra

Other Common Names: Northern Schisandra, Schizandra, Wu Wei Zi

Family: Schisandraceae

Taxonomy: *Schisandra* includes 23 species of woody vines, almost all native to east Asia. The basionym of *S. chinensis* is *Kadsura chinensis* Turcz.

Description: Woody vine. Leaves alternate, clustered on lateral branches, petiolate, obovate, (4.5–)5.5–8(–10.5) cm long; base acute to attenuate, apex acuminate, margins with several short inconspicuous teeth; texture papery; venation pinnate with secondary veins slightly forward-curving, sometimes pubescent over veins. Flowers unisexual and plants monoecious or dioecious; flowers solitary, axillary, with perianth of 6–9 tepals; tepals yellow to white, 6.5–10 mm long, somewhat unequal in size. Male flowers with 5 fused stamens. Female flowers with 14–40 separate carpels, spirally arranged on receptacle, with stigmatic crest along one side [a very primitive form of carpel]. Fruit an aggregate of berries, borne on elongated stemlike receptacle 2–6 cm long; berries pinkish red, 5–8 mm long, 4–5(–6) mm broad, subspherical. Seeds 1–2 per berry, reniform or rarely round, flattened, with notch in one of the long sides, (2.9–)3.2–3.8(–4.0) mm long, (3.6–)4.4–4.8(–5.0) mm broad; surface smooth.

Parts in Commerce: Dried ripe fruit

Identification:

- 5–8 mm long, broadly elliptical to subspherical
- Dark red when dried (pinkish red in fresh material), sometimes blackish red or with whitish coating, but not brown
- Surface glabrous, irregularly wrinkled on drying
- Seeds 1–2 per fruit
- Seeds moderately flattened, broadly reniform or rarely round with small notch
- Seeds (3.6–)4.4–4.8(–5.0) mm broad (across longest dimension), (2.9–)3.2–3.8(–4.0) mm long
- Seeds smooth and glossy, without wrinkles or warts, orange-brown to yellowish brown
- Taste of fruit pulp sour
- Crushed seeds with aromatic odor, pungent taste

Adulterants: Many of the 23 species of *Schisandra* are used as edible or medicinal fruits; one similar species overlaps *S. chinensis* in range, and others are commonly cultivated in Asia. All can generally be distinguished from *S. chinensis* by the presence of at least one of the following features:

- Underlying fruit color blackish purple rather than red, or fruit surface brown
- Fruits and seeds larger or smaller than expected (note that most species have fruits of quite variable size)
- Seeds 3 per fruit
- Seeds disk-shaped, elliptical, or pear-shaped
- Seed surface wrinkled or warty

In Chinese medicine, *S. chinensis* and *S. sphenanthera* Rehd. & Wils. may be used interchangeably. The latter has smaller fruits with a reddish brown to dark brown epidermis.

References:

Pharmacopoeia Commission of PRC, eds. *Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China*, English ed.. Vol. 1. Beijing: Chemical Industry Press; 1997:77.

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