



Spartium junceum L.

FABACEAE

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Local Names

Bolivia: Retama (Spanish) (Macía et al. 2005, Justo Chipana and Moraes 2015, Bussmann et al. 2016); **Colombia:** Retama, Retama de olor (Spanish); **Ecuador:** Retama, Flor de retama, Retama, Retama macho (Spanish) (de la Torre et al. 2008); **Peru:** Retama (Spanish)

Botany and Ecology

Shrub to 2 m high; branches erect, stout, green, sulcate, very sparsely leafy, leaves simple, short-petioled or sessile, lanceolate or oblong-oval, stiff, with prominent midrib, 2–4 cm long, and 0.2–0.4 cm broad; flowers short-pedicel in a long loose terminal raceme; calyx membranous, inflated, split above almost to base, with 5 short

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Fig. 1 *Spartium junceum* (Fabaceae), garden, Chicani, Bolivia. (Photo R.W. Bussmann and N.Y. Paniagua-Zambrana)



acute teeth on lower side, 8–9 mm long; corolla yellow; standard suborbicular, 30 mm long including claw, 25 mm broad, slightly attenuate toward apex; wings oblong, 2 cm long, with a short claw and a rather sharp auricle; keel sharp-tipped, curved, darker than other petals, 25 mm long; petal claws adnate to staminal tube; style exceeding stamens; pod linear, flat, many-seeded in the Mediterranean, widely planted as ornamental (Macbride and Weberbauer 1936-1995) (Figs. 1, 2 and 3).

Local Medicinal Uses

Bolivia: Fresh branches and leaves are used to treat heartache, against curses, good luck, lightning stroke, to drive away evil spirits, “limpias,” damn (sajra), postpartum care, and gallbladder (Macía et al. 2005, Justo Chipana and Moraes 2015, Bussmann et al. 2016). **Colombia:** Flowers soaked in alcohol are used in Colombia to treat rheumatism. For this purpose, the stems and leaves are also used, applying them in the form of frictions on the affected part (García Barriga 1974; Pérez Arbeláez 1996). Leaves, flowers, and seeds are used to treat constipation; flowers are used to treat diabetes (Bussmann et al. 2018).

Fig. 2 *Spartium junceum* (Fabaceae), garden, Chicani, Bolivia. (Photo R.W. Bussmann and N.Y. Paniagua-Zambrana)



Ecuador: The flower, in infusion, is used to treat cough and kidney ailments (unspecified ethnic group – Chimborazo, Cañar). The infusion is used to purge, along with broom, “piqui yuyu,” “maihua,” and “horse sucks” (unspecified ethnicity – Pichincha). The leaves and flowers, in infusion, serve to treat urine sickness, discomfort of the menstrual period, and liver conditions (Kichwa de la Sierra-Chimborazo, Cañar). The seeds, in moderate doses, are emetic and purgative. The seeds are used in small doses to treat dropsy (unspecified ethnicity – Azuay, Cañar). It is diuretic (unspecified ethnic group – Cotopaxi, Azuay, Cañar). It is used to treat liver conditions and stomach pain (Mestiza-Imbabura). It is used to treat ulcers, gastritis, stomach and heart pain, and kidney conditions (pain and retention of urine) (Mestiza-Pichincha) (de la Torre et al. 2008). **Peru:** Fresh flowers and soot are used to treat hepatitis, liver, high blood pressure, and diabetes (Bussmann and Sharon 2006b, 2007b, 2015a, b; Bussmann and Glenn 2010, 2011). *Spartium* has strong antibacterial activity (Bussmann et al. 2008, 2010a, b, c; 2011a; Bussmann and Glenn 2011), but the plant is also toxic (Bussmann et al. 2011b). Due to its toxicity, it is mostly used in mixture with other plants (Bussmann et al. 2010d). It is sold in local markets (Bussmann et al. 2007; Revene et al. 2008).

Fig. 3 *Spartium junceum* (Fabaceae), garden, Chicani, Bolivia. (Photo R.W. Bussmann and N.Y. Paniagua-Zambrana)



Local Handicraft and Other Uses

Ecuador: It is used as guinea pig fodder (unspecified ethnicity – Azuay). Fuels: The plant is used as fuel (unspecified ethnicity – Azuay) (de la Torre et al. 2008). The flower is used to extract a yellow dye (unspecified ethnicity – Azuay, Cañar). With the branches, brooms are made (Kichwa de la Sierra-Chimborazo, Cañar; unspecified ethnic group – Carchi, Azuay, Cañar). It is used for baths (Mestiza-Pichincha) (de la Torre et al. 2008). The flower is used in ornaments, in religious festivals such as the Setenario de Corpus (unspecified ethnic group – Azuay, Cañar). The leaves and flowers, in drinks, baths, or plasters, are used to counteract spells and cure “bad air” and “fright” (Kichwa de la Sierra Chimboraz, Cañar; unspecified ethnicity – Loja) (from de la Torre et al. 2008). The whole fresh plant is used for fright/susto (Béjar et al. 2001; Bussmann and Sharon 2006a, 2007a). **Peru:** It is used for spiritual flowering and protection (Bussmann et al. 2010d).

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