

### *Ricinus communis*

#### Scientific classification

Kingdom : Plantae  
Clade : Angiosperms  
Order : Malpighiales  
Family : Euphorbiaceae  
Subfamily : Acalyphoideae  
Tribe : Acalypheae  
Genus : *Ricinus*  
Species : *R. communis*



*Ricinus communis*

#### Description

*Ricinus communis* can vary greatly in its growth habit and appearance. The variability has been increased by breeders who have selected a range of cultivars for leaf and flower colours, and for oil production. It is a fast-growing, **suckering shrub** that can reach the size of a small tree, around 12 m (39 ft), but it is not **cold hardy**.

The glossy **leaves** are 15–45 cm (6–18 in) long, long-stalked, alternate and palmate with five to twelve deep lobes with coarsely toothed segments. In some varieties they start off dark reddish purple or bronze when young, gradually changing to a dark green, sometimes with a reddish tinge, as they mature.

The leaves of some other varieties are green practically from the start, whereas in yet others a pigment masks the green color of all the **chlorophyll**-bearing parts, leaves, stems and young fruit, so that they remain a dramatic purple-to-reddish-brown throughout the life of the plant. Plants with the dark leaves can be found growing next to those with green leaves, so there is most likely only a single gene controlling the production of the pigment in some varieties. The stems and the spherical, spiny seed capsules also vary in pigmentation. The fruit capsules of some varieties are more showy than the flowers.

#### Medicinal uses

An alcoholic extract of the leaf was shown, in lab rats, to protect the liver from damage from certain poisons.<sup>1</sup>

**Methanolic** extracts of the leaves of *Ricinus communis* were used in **antimicrobial** testing against eight pathogenic bacteria in rats and showed antimicrobial properties.

The **pericarp** of *Ricinus* showed central nervous system effects in mice at low doses. At high doses mice quickly died.

A water extract of the root bark showed analgesic activity in rats.<sup>1</sup>

Antihistamine and anti-inflammatory properties were found in ethanolic extract of *Ricinus communis* root bark.