

Sassafras tzumu

Sassafras tzumu (Chinese sassafras, Cha mu) is a species of *Sassafras* native to China, in Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Yunnan and Zhejiang.[1] It grows in either sparse or dense forests habitat types, at altitudes of 100–1900 meters (330–3000 ft).[2]

Sassafras tzumu is a deciduous tree reaching heights of up to 35 meters (115 ft). The longitudinally fissured wood is colored yellow-green, but changes to gray or brown when the plant is mature. The branching is sympodial. The leaves are alternate, gray-green, ovate or obovate, 9–18 cm long and 6–10 cm broad with 2-7 centimeter, slender, reddish petioles. Leaves may be two-lobed or three-lobed. Flowers are yellow and about 4 millimeters with blue-black and white waxy fruit.[2] One historical source reports trees of up to 100 meters (330 ft), although this is not corroborated by modern sources.[3]

Sassafras tzumu and *Sassafras randaiense* differ from the North American species in that they may have both male flowers with 3 staminodes and 1 rudimentary pistil, and female flowers with 12 staminodes on the same tree, while the North American species (see *Sassafras albidum*) are dioecious (individual plants bear only male or only female flowers). Molecular data also supports some differences between the Chinese and North American species.[4][5] Like those of *Sassafras albidum*, *Sassafras tzumu*'s leaves may have 2 or 3 lobes, although leaves with 3 lobes occur more frequently in *S. tzumu* while they are possible but rare in *S. albidum*. [6]

The bark of *Sassafras tzumu* is durable fine-grained and yellow. The wood is used in shipbuilding and furniture making because of its durability.[7] The plant is used for medicinal purposes, to treat rheumatism and trauma.[8] Essential oils may be extracted from bark, roots, or fruit, and contain a 1% concentration of phenylpropene safrole. According to other sources, the bark of *Sassafras tzumu* contains a particularly large quantity of safrole oil at 97%, making it valuable for those wishing to use the oil for commercial purposes or for the purposes of producing illicit drugs.[9]

