



Ceratostigma

Ceratostigma (/ˌsɛərətɒˈstiɡmə, sɪˌræ-l/), or leadwort, plumbago, is a genus of eight species of flowering plants in the family *Plumbaginaceae*, native to warm temperate to tropical regions of Africa and Asia. Common names are shared with the genus *Plumbago*.

They are flowering herbaceous plants, subshrubs, or small shrubs growing to 0.3–1 m (0.98–3.28 ft) tall. The leaves are spirally arranged, simple, 1–9 cm long, usually with a hairy margin. Some of the species are evergreen, others deciduous. The flowers are produced in a compact inflorescence, each flower with a five-lobed corolla; flower colour varies from pale to dark blue to red-purple.

The fruit is a small bristly capsule containing a single seed.

Selected species

- *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides* (Bunge)
- *Ceratostigma willmottianum* Stapf

Cultivation and uses

Plants of this genus are valued in the garden for their late summer flower colour and their autumn leaf colour.

The following varieties have gained the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit (confirmed 2017):

Ceratostigma has been listed as one of the 38 plants that are used to prepare Bach flower remedies, a kind of alternative medicine promoted for its effect on mental and emotional health.

Ceratostigma plumbaginoides, commonly called plumbago or leadwort, is a wiry, mat-forming perennial which spreads by rhizomes to form an attractive ground cover. Typically grows 6-10" tall on generally erect stems rising from the rhizomes. Oval to obovate, shiny, medium green leaves (to 2" long) turn bronze-red in autumn. Terminal clusters of 5-petaled, gentian blue flowers (1/2 to 3/4" diameter) appear above the foliage over a long summer to frost bloom period. Flowers resemble those of woodland phlox.

Genus name comes from the Greek words *keras* meaning a horn and *stigma* from the hornlike projection on the stigma of the flower.

Specific epithet means resembling the genus *Plumbago*.

Garden Uses

Late, long-flowering plant serves as excellent ground cover for sunny to partly shaded areas in the landscape. A good plant for interplanting with spring bulbs because foliage emerges late as the bulb foliage is dying back. Underplanting for shrubs. Edger. May be used in rock gardens or border fronts with careful monitoring of spread. As a ground cover, plumbago would probably be as extensively planted as *vinca*, *pachysandra* or English ivy, except for the fact that it lacks their evergreen foliage.