

## ENCYCLIA ELEGANTULA: AN ATTRACTIVE AND UNEXPECTED NEW SPECIES FROM PANAMA

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SOME SPECIES OF *ENCYCLIA* are quite distinctive and very attractive, but there are so many of them, and many of them are bewilderingly similar. Even with *Prosthechea* recognized as a separate genus, there are still many species of *Encyclia*, especially in Mexico and southern Brazil. There are relatively few true *Encyclias* in between, so we were quite surprised to find a distinctive and attractive species in Panama in September of 2002. The area of Goofy Lake, Cerro Azul, and Cerro Jefe, east of Panama City, has long been accessible and is relatively well known, and *Encyclia amanda* is fairly frequent in the area. [According to local legend, the owner of the property proposed to dam the stream and make a lake. His friends said (in very Panamanian Spanish), "No, hombre, estás goofy, tú no puedes hacer eso," (No man, you're goofy, you can't do that) but he did, and it has been "Goofy Lake" ever since.]

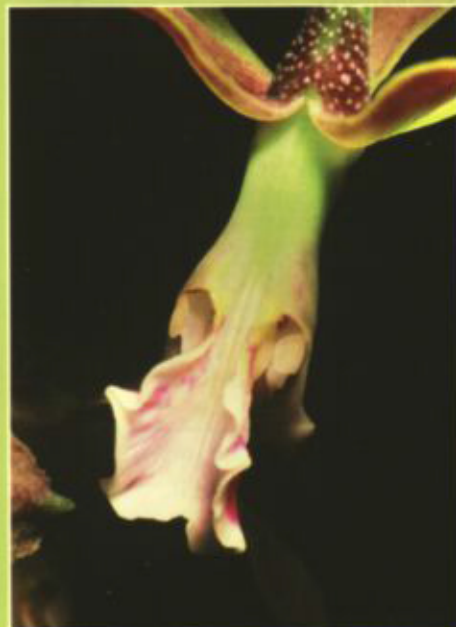
Now the road to Altos de Pacora, further east, is much better and we could easily reach areas we had not seen before. We were very pleased to find that *Masdevallia pelecanceps*, once known from Cerro Jefe, is alive and well in Altos de Pacora. We hope the same may be true of other rarities first found on Cerro Jefe, such as *Crossoglossa bifida* and *Masdevallia pleurothalloides*. In mid-afternoon, when thunder was heard in the distance, threatening rain, Erick Olmos and Javier Nuñez brought back a single *Encyclia* in full flower, definitely something we had not seen.



*Encyclia elegantula*



*Encyclia amanda*



*Encyclia elegantula* lip



*Encyclia elegantula*

Those who have seen the plant in flower all have much the same reaction. The flowers look like small *Encyclia tampensis*, but they are so brightly colored and there are so many that it is really very attractive.

I have been unable to find anything similar from Central America or in adjacent South America, so I describe it here as a new species.

***Encyclia elegantula* Dressler, sp. nov.**

**Holotype:** PANAMÁ. Prov. Panamá, Altos de Pacora, 930 m, cloud forest, 18 Sept. 2002, A. Maduro y E. Olmos 303, MO; clonotype (*Dressler 6402*, PMA).

*Species Encycliae amandae similis, floribus atrocastaneis petalis unguiculatis suborbicularis, apicibus lobulorum lateralibus labeli aliquantum reflexis, venis lobuli mediani magis incrassatis, sepalis in apice breviter carinatis verruculosisque differt.*

**Pseudobulbs** conic-ovoid, 4.5 x 2.8-3 cm. **Leaves** 2 or 3, 13-26 x 2-2.4 cm. **Inflorescence** 55-65 cm, peduncle 35-39 cm, rachis 20-25 cm, with 5-6 branches 4-6 cm in length. Sepals and petals brown on yellow background; midlobe of lip with magenta central blotch and white margins; lateral lobes brown with white apices; **Pedicel** with ovary ca. 22 mm, verruculose, especially distally. **Sepals** apically short-carinate and verruculose. Dorsal sepal 12.5 x 5.8 mm, subunguiculate, obovate, obtuse, apiculate. Lateral sepals 13 x 5.5 mm, elliptic, subunguiculate, apiculate. **Petals** 12.5 x 7 mm, unguiculate, suborbicular, apiculate. **Lip** 10.5 mm long, 3-lobed, lateral lobes 3.5 x 2 mm, oblong, obtuse, apices slightly spreading distally, isthmus ca. 1 mm, with margins inrolled beneath, margins verruculose basally, midlobe 5.5 x 6 mm, suborbicular, heavily veined above, the veins verruculose, **Column** 6.5 mm, wings 1 x 1 mm, oblong, rounded, incurved.

The specific epithet *elegantula* is based on the Latin *elegans*, or elegant, and the diminutive suffix *-ula*, because the individual flowers are relatively small. *Encyclia elegantula* is close to *E. amanda* both in geography and in structure, but *E. elegantula* differs from *E. amanda* especially in the much wider petals, in the heavily sculptured midlobe and in the more verruculose sepals. The isthmus of the lip is curled under on both sides and there is a thick, warty area basally on each side, a feature that I have not seen in any other *Encyclia* (though this feature would be easy to overlook). From a horticultural viewpoint, the flowers of *E. elegantula* are much more brightly colored and the inflorescence is larger and more densely flowered. My observations of *E. amanda* in Panama show the sepals and petals to be pale green, apple green or pale brown, while the sepals and petals of *E. elegantula* are dark, nearly chocolate brown on a yellow background. Similarly, *E. amanda* has few pink or rose-purple streaks on the lip, but *E. elegantula* has a well-defined magenta spot surrounded by white. From the small sample, the leaves of *E. elegantula* appear to be shorter and wider than those of *E. amanda*.

It must be noted that *E. amanda*, which is very similar to the South American *E. chloroleuca*, has an unusual distribution. It was first described from Panama, but is also found in Belize. A very close ally, *E. peraltensis*, is found in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and southern Mexico. These two species are so similar that one wonders if *E. peraltensis* is not just a smaller-flowered form of *E. amanda*, but this can only be clarified by studying the distribution and variation in Belize, where both occur.

In any case, *Encyclia elegantula* is an attractive new species, and Andrew Maduro reports that they have seen several plants from the same area. He also reports a dull yellow-flowered species in the area that he thinks may be a species distinct from *E. elegantula*.

## Acknowledgement

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