

*Lepanthes abortiva* Luer & Escobar, sp. nov.

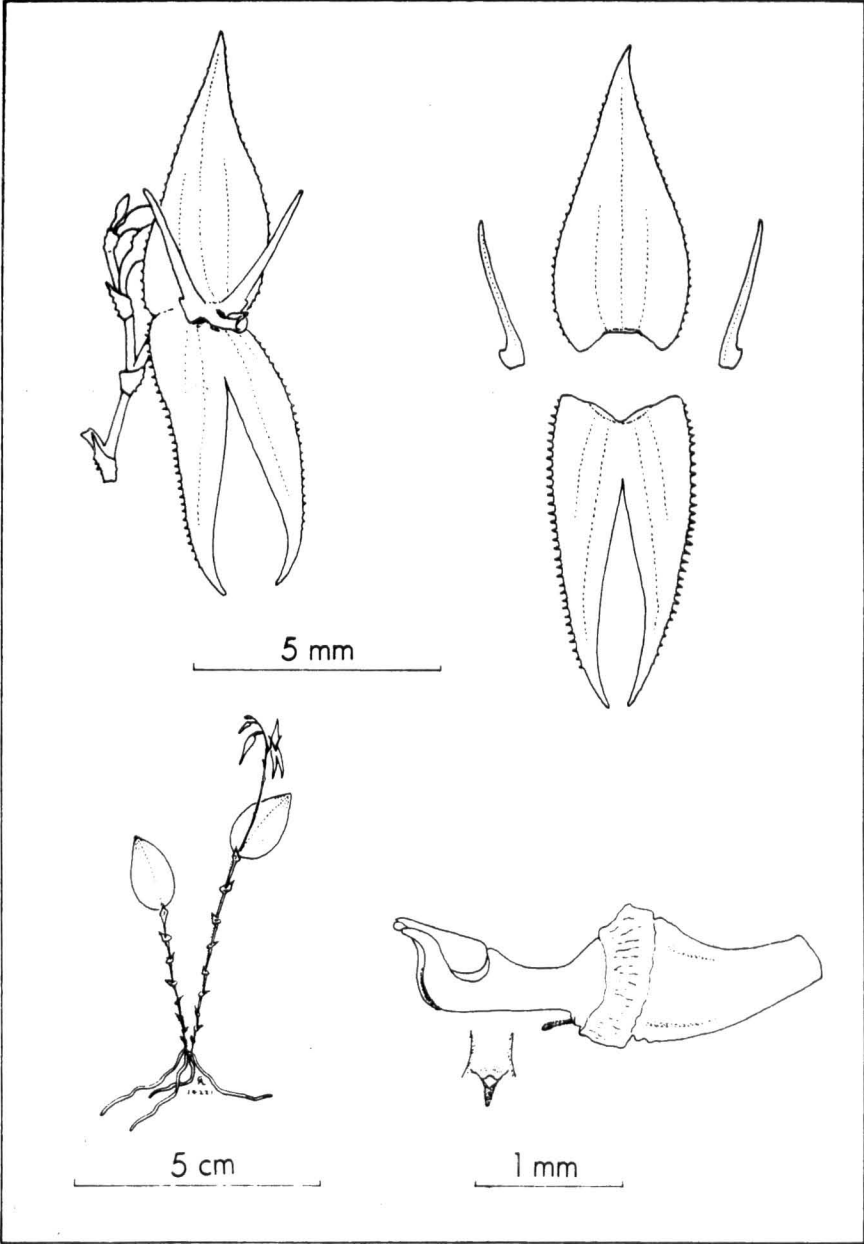
Planta parva, inflorescentia racemosa laxe pauciflora folio ovato acuto plus minusve duplolongiore, sepalis anguste ovatis acutis denticulatis, petalis unilobis erectis anguste linearibus basi minute angulatis, labello maxime minutissimo ligulato pubescenti.

Plant small, epiphytic, caespitose; roots slender. Ramicauls slender, erect, 20-35 cm long, enclosed by 7-9 ciliated, lepanthiform sheaths. Leaf erect, coriaceous, ovate, acute, 11-16 mm long, 9-11 mm wide, the base broadly cuneate to a petiole 1 mm long. Inflorescence a loose, successively few-flowered raceme up to 10 mm or more long, borne from the top side of the leaf by a filiform peduncle up to 15 mm long; floral bract 1 mm long; pedicel 1 mm long; ovary 1.25 mm long; sepals red-brown, sharply carinate, denticulate, narrowly ovate, acute, the dorsal sepal 6 mm long, 2.75 mm wide, connate to the lateral sepals for 0.75 mm, the lateral sepals oblique, 6 mm long, 1.5 mm wide, connate 1 mm; petals glabrous, yellow, 1-lobed, erect, narrowly linear, 1 mm long, 0.3 mm wide, with a small angle on the labellar margin above the base; lip extremely minute, microscopically pubescent, without blades, connectives or body, apparently reduced to a ligulate structure resembling an appendix, 0.12 mm long, 0.05 mm wide, from the base of the column; column comparatively large, terete 1.25 mm long, the anther dorsal, the stigma apical.

Etymology: From the Latin *abortivus*, "abortive", referring to the vestigial lip.

COLOMBIA: Without collection data: flowered in cultivation at Colomborquídea, s 18 Mar. 1989, *C. Luer 14221* (Holotype: MO, Isotype: JAUM).

Unfortunately the collection data of this species have been lost. It is still possible that a duplicate plant with collection data will flower in the future. In the meantime, this species is unique in the genus. Excluding the subgenus *Draconanthes*, only Central American *Lepanthes eximia* Ames possesses a narrowly linear,



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single-lobed petal. The lip is not known to have an equal. It is reduced to an extremely minute organ only 0.12 millimeter in length.

At first I thought that the lip had been lost or eaten by an insect, but with high power magnification a tiny object could be seen. To confirm or deny my suspicion I opened a nearly mature bud and found the same microscopic structure. It is devoid of lateral lobes, connectives or a body. This vestigial "lip" is attached to the base of the comparatively large column where it is invisible to the naked eye.



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Photograph: Sebastian Vieira U.  
Grower: Colomborquideas.