

Lepanthes cyrtostele Luer & Hirtz, sp. nov.

Fig. 269.

Ety.: From the Greek *kyrtostele*, "bent column," referring to the curved column.

Planta mediocris vel grandis, racemis sublaxe successivifloris folio angustissime elliptico-ovato plus minusve leviter brevioribus, sepalis acutis minute denticulatis, lateralibus 1-nervis, petalis transverse bilobis, lobis triangularibus, lobo superiore leviter majore, labelli lamina oblongis convexis longiciliatis, connectivis brevibus obliquis, appendice triangulari apice ciliata, columna arcuata stigmatibus bilobis.

Plant medium to large, epiphytic, caespitose; roots coarse. Ramicauls stout, erect, 10-25 cm long, enclosed by 10-14 glabrous, gray, ribbed lepanthiform sheaths with oblique, non-dilated ostia. **Leaf** suberect, coriaceous, more or less suffused with purple, narrowly elliptical-ovate, acute, 6-9 cm long, 1-1.6 cm wide, the base cuneate into a petiole 5-6 mm long. **Inflorescence** a sublax, distichous, successively many-flowered raceme, 3-7 cm long, borne by a slender peduncle 1-1.5 cm long, along the back of the leaf, occasionally 2 flowers open simultaneously; floral bracts narrowly infundibular, 2-2.5 mm long; pedicel 1-1.5 mm long; ovary 2.5 mm long, papillose along ribs; **sepals** denticulate, carinate, the dorsal sepal purple with yellow-green margin, ovate, acute, 7 mm long, 4 mm wide, 3-veined, connate 1.5 mm to the lateral sepals, the lateral sepals microscopically cellular-glandular, purple on inner half, yellow on outer half, ovate, acute, 7 mm long, 3 mm wide, 1-veined, connate 1-1.5 mm; **petals** yellow, minutely pubescent, transversely bilobed, 1.8 mm long, 4 mm wide, the lobes triangular, narrowly obtuse, the upper lobe larger; **lip** white, purple medially, bilaminar, the blades narrowly elliptical-falcate, 3 mm long, long-ciliate, the apices narrowly rounded, the bases broader, convex and obliquely acute, the connectives broad, oblique, the body broad, connate to the base of the column, the appendix small, oblong, ciliate at the tip; **column** slender, arcuate, 2.5 mm long, the anther apical, the stigma transversely bilobed.

ECUADOR: **Carchi:** Bolívar, above La Paz, epiphytic in cloud forest, alt. 3300 m, 18 Feb. 1998, C. Luer, J. Luer, A. Hirtz & J. del Hierro 18748 (Holotype: MO; Isotype: QCNE). **Imbabura:** Mariano Acosta, El Tambo, alt. 3500 m, 21 Feb. 1998, A. Hirtz & J. del Hierro s.n. (MO, QCNE); Mariano Acosta, alt. 3300 m, Aug. 1997, A. Hirtz, X. Hirtz & E. Sánchez 6586 (Holotype MO), C. Luer illustr. 18689.

This species occurs at an altitude over 3300 meters above sea level. It is apparently endemic in northern Ecuador. By virtue of the subax racemes shorter than the leaves, and with the lateral sepals one-veined, it falls into section *Lepanthes* subsection *Breves* series *Breves*. It is distinguished by the pale, non-dilated, ribbed, lepanthiform sheaths that cover a tall ramicaul; narrowly elliptical-ovate leaves; and a successively flowered inflorescence the eventually approaches the length of the leaves. The sepals are acute and minutely denticulate; the laterals are single-veined. The lobes of the transverse petals are triangular and obtuse. The protruding column is arcuate and covered by narrow, long-ciliate blades of the lip.

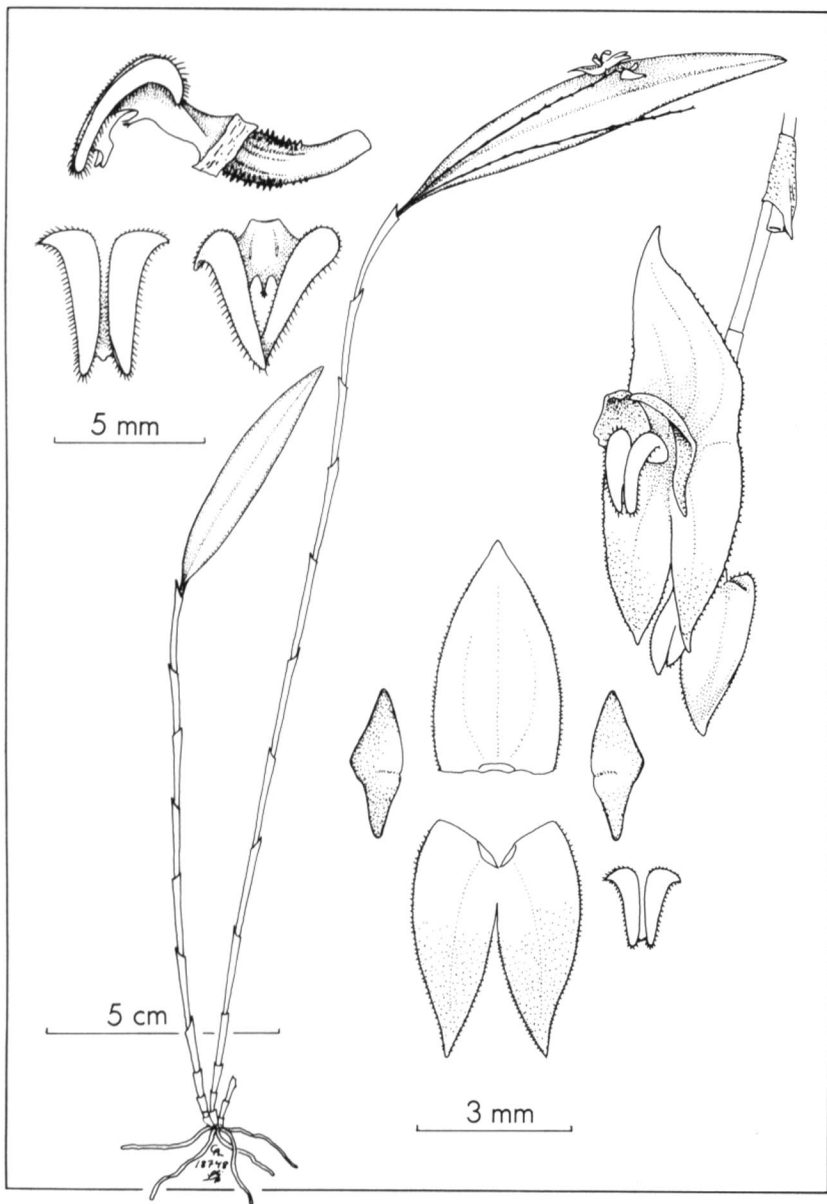


Fig. 269. *Lepanthes cyrtostele*