

Lepanthes ricina Luer & Dalström, sp. nov.

Fig. 204.

Ety.: From the Latin *ricinus*, "with a veil," referring to the curtain-like covering over the column.

Planta mediocris grandisve, foliis obovatis abrupte acuminatis racemo congestissimo longioribus, sepalis late ovatis breviter acuminatis glabris, petalis transverse oblongis, labelli laminis lunatis marginibus interioribus cum velo diaphano supra columnam.

Plant medium is size, epiphytic, caespitose, roots slender. Ramicauls slender, erect, 12-18 cm long, enclosed by 14-20 long-ciliate, lepanthiform sheaths. **Leaf** erect, coriaceous, elliptical to obovate, subacute, abruptly acuminate, 5-8 cm long, 1.5-3 cm wide, the base broadly cuneate to rounded into a petiole 2-3 mm long. **Inflorescence** a very congested, distichous, successively many-flowered raceme, up to 15 mm long, borne behind the leaf by a slender peduncle 15-20 mm long; floral bracts 1.5 mm long; pedicels 2 mm long; ovary 2 mm long; **sepals** yellow, glabrous, the dorsal sepal broadly ovate, obtuse, lightly acuminate, 5 mm long, 4.75 mm wide, 3-veined, connate to the lateral sepals for 1.5 mm, the lateral sepals ovate, oblique, subacute, lightly acuminate, 5 mm long, 2.5 mm wide, 2-veined, connate 1.5 mm; **petals** orange, tipped with red, densely cellular-pubescent, transversely bilobed, 1 mm long, 4 mm wide, the lobes subequal, the upper lobe oblong with the apex rounded, the lower lobe similar but smaller and slightly curved inward; **lip** purple, bilaminate, the blades pubescent, thick, lunate, 1.25 mm long, the inner margins with a common, transparent veil with a jagged edge that descends to cover the column, the connectives thick, broadly cuneate, forming a broad, thick body, connate to the base of the column, the sinus thick, protuberant, with the three-parted, brush-like appendix hinged to the lower margin; **column** thick, 1 mm long, the anther apical, the stigma ventral.

Imbabura: epiphytic wet forest, Los Cedros Reserve, along trail to Río Los Cedros, alt. 1,200 m, 20 Jan. 1993, S. Dalström, T. Höjjer & H. Wanntorp 1700 (Holotype, MO).

This species is distinguished by the tall ramicauls, and an obovate, abruptly acuminate leaf. The congested raceme is borne behind the leaf. The sepals are smooth, broad, and lightly acuminate; the petals are transversely oblong. Most unusual is the transparent veil that descends from the inner margins of the thick, lunate blades of the lip to cover the thick column. The veil from the two blades is united in the center, and the distal margin in ragged. It appears to be made of a thin, cellular substance.

Two other, apparently not closely related species are known to have developed independently a similar veil over the column: *L. deformis* from Ecuador and Costa Rica, and *L. velifera* Luer & Béhar from Guatemala. To investigate the function or necessity of such a strange structure would be an interesting challenge.

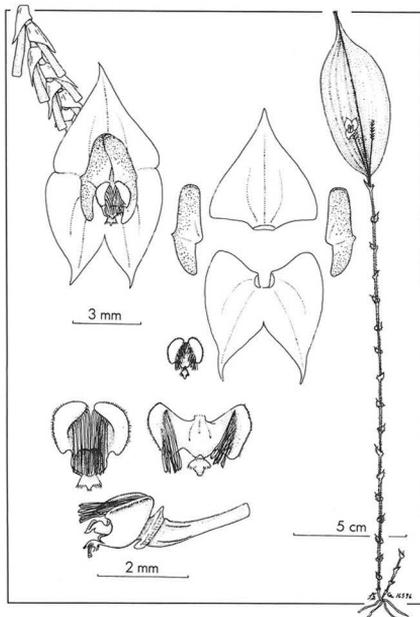


Fig. 204. *Lepanthes ricina*