

**Lepanthes stalactites** Luer & Hirtz, sp. nov.

Planta mediocris crassa rhizomate longipendenti, foliis ellipticis subsessilibus distichis, racemo brevissimo parvifloro, sepalis ellipticis obtusis, petalis transverse bilobis, lobis obliquis obtusis, laminis labelli ovoideis quam columna crassa multiminoribus, appendice triangulari concava.

Plant coarse, large for the subgenus *Brachycladium*, epiphytic, pendent, up to a meter long, the rhizome stout, 3-5 mm long between ramicauls, enclosed by 2 loose sheaths, roots coarse at the base. Ramicauls stout 2 mm long, enclosed by 2 glabrous, lepanthiform sheaths. Leaves pendent, distichous, thickly coriaceous, elliptical, subacute, 9-16 mm long, 7-11 mm wide, the base cuneate into a petiole 1 mm long. Inflorescence a congested, successively few-flowered raceme up to 3 mm long including the peduncle ca. 1 mm long, borne on top of the leaf; floral bracts 1 mm long; pedicels 2 mm long; ovary 1.5 mm long; sepals cellular-pubescent, the dorsal sepal red-orange, red-brown toward the base, obovate, obtuse, 2.5 mm long, 2 mm wide, free from the lateral sepals, the lateral sepals red-brown, elliptical, obtuse, 2.3 mm long, 1.2 mm wide, 1-veined, connate 1 mm; petals dark purple, transversely bilobed, shortly pubescent, 0.5 mm long, 1.6 mm wide, the upper lobe oblong, incurved, rounded, the lower lobe slightly longer, oblong, obtusely angled on the inner margin, obtuse; lip deep purple, bilaminate, the blades shortly pubescent, ovoid, 0.8 mm long, held to either side of the column by oblong connectives, the body connate to the base of the column, the sinus occupied by a comparatively large, triangular, concave appendix; column thick, 1.2 mm long, 1 mm broad at the apex, the anther dorsal, the stigma ventral.

ETYMOLOGY: From the Greek *stalaktos* (Latin *stalactites*), "a stalactite," referring to the habit of the plant.

TYPE: *ECUADOR*: Prov. of Loja: epiphytic in cold, cloud forest above Jimbura, alt. 3000 m, 21 March 1984, C. Luer, S. Dalström, T. Höijer & J. Kuijt 9657 (Holotype: MO); same area, 21 Feb. 1986, alt. 2900 m, C. Luer, J. Luer, A. Hirtz, W. Flores & A. Embree 11991 (MO).

Vegetatively this species is probably the largest and the coarsest of all the species in the subgenus *Brachycladium*. Long, pendent cylinders of the fleshy, overlapping leaves dangle in masses or individually from the undersurfaces of large, mossy, horizontal tree trunks in the cold mountain forests above Jimbura near the Peruvian border. It is locally abundant, some large branches supporting dozens of the dangling, stalactitelike plants. The flowers are small but numerous. Growing in the same trees are masses of *Masdevallia dura* Luer and *Pleurothallis dalstroemii* Luer.