

Platystele taylori C. Luer, sp. nov.

Herba minutissima epiphytica caespitosa, caulibus secundariis abbreviatis unifoliatis, foliis late obovatis obtusis tridenticulatis base cuneatis breviter petiolatis, racemo paucifloro folio duplolongiore, floribus successivis, sepalis flavo pellucidis ovatis acuminatis acutis, petalis linearibus acuminatis breviter ciliatis, labello rubro ovato acuminato acuto sepalis leviter ampliore.

Plant extremely small, epiphytic, caespitose; roots slender, flexuous. Secondary stems abbreviated, 1-1.5 mm long, mostly concealed by 1-2 thin sheaths, unifoliolate. Leaf broadly elliptic-obovate, the apex rounded to obtuse, tridenticulate, the base cuneate, short-petiolate, 4-5 × 2.5 mm, including the petiole. Inflorescence a few-flowered raceme, 5-8 mm long, the flowers produced singly and successively; peduncle filiform, from a node on the secondary stem; floral bract infundibuliform 0.5 mm long; pedicel 1.5 mm long; ovary 0.3 mm long; sepals translucent yellow, ovate, acuminate, acute, 1.6 × 0.6 mm, 1-veined, the lateral sepals free, oblique; petals narrowly linear, acuminate, acute, the margins microscopically short-ciliate, 1.2 × 0.2 mm; lip red, ovate, acuminate, acute, 1.8 × 0.8 mm; column very short, hooded, the stigma bilobed.

ETYMOLOGY: Named in honor of its discoverer, Peter Taylor of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England.

TYPE: PANAMA: PANAMA: Epiphytic along the Altos de Pacora road, alt. 650 m, 4 March 1976, C. Luer, J. Luer, P. Taylor & R. L. Dressler 741 (HOLOTYPE: SEL).

DISTRIBUTION: Panama

This extremely minute species is one of the smallest of the genus. Tiny clumps of obovate leaves produce hair-like peduncles to about twice their length, but a flowering plant still reaches less than a centimeter in height. The nearly microscopic yellow flowers with a bright red lip are produced singly in a slow succession. All the flower parts are acuminate or caudate, the petals linear, the sepals and lip ovate. The long-pointed lip is slightly larger than the sepals.

A piece of bark, bearing about eight tiny clumps of these miniscule plants was discovered by Peter Taylor in the rain forest on the flank of Cerro Jefe east of Panama City. They have continued to flower intermittently in cultivation at the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens.

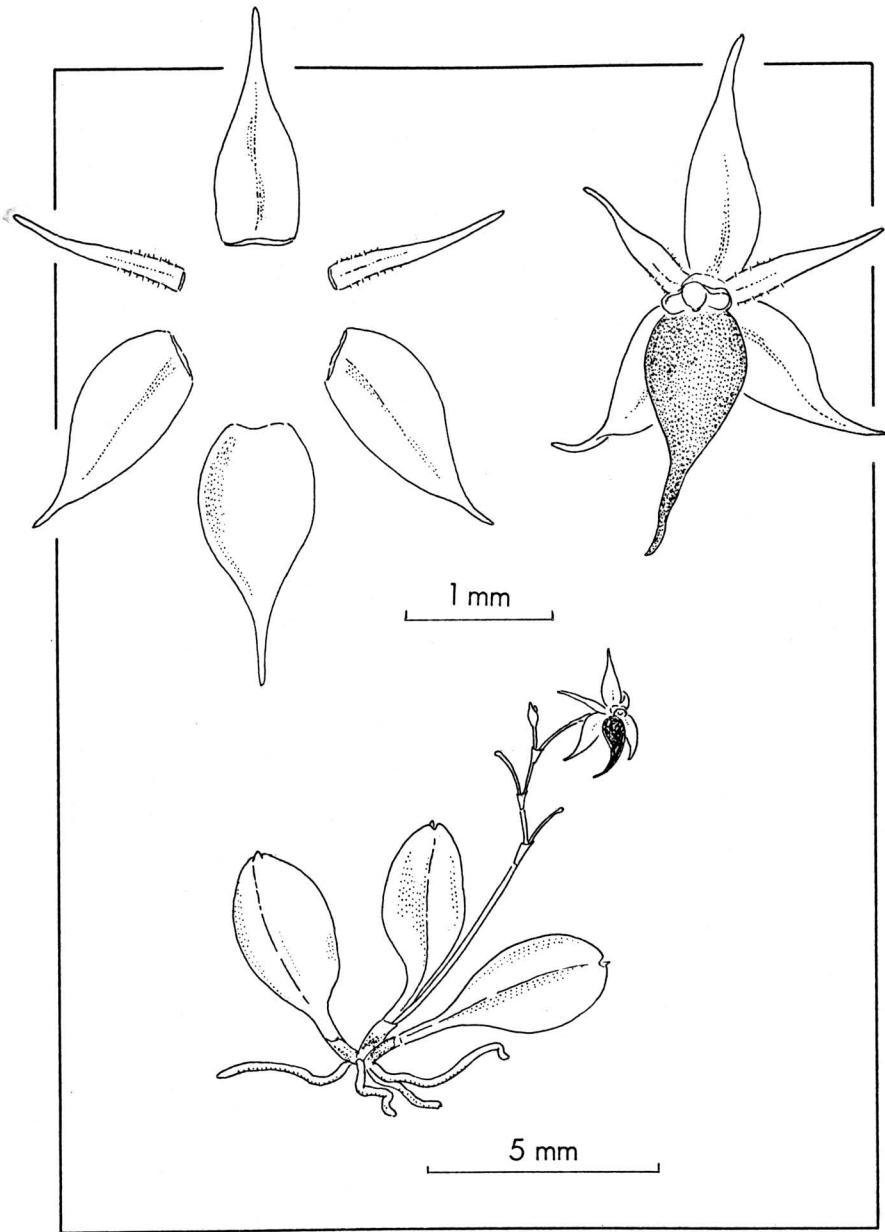


Figure 118. *PLATYSTELE TAYLORI* C. A. Luer