

166. ***Stelis liberalis*** Luer & Portillo, sp. nov.

Ety.: From the Latin *liberalis*, "free," referring to the nonconnate sepals.

Planta parva caespitosa, racemo congesto multifloro folio elliptico multilongiore, sepalis expansis, ellipticis ad basim liberalibus, petalis uninervis et labello obtuse apiculato distinguitur.

**Plant** small, epiphytic, caespitose; roots slender. Ramicauls erect, slender, 1.5-2 cm long, enclosed by a tubular sheath from below the middle and another 1-2 sheaths at the base. **Leaf** erect, coriaceous, elliptical, obtuse, 3.5-4.5 cm long including a petiole 0.8-1 cm long, the blade 1-1.2 cm wide, cuneate below into the petiole. **Inflorescence** an erect, strict, slender, congested, subsecund, simultaneously many-flowered raceme, 12-16 cm long including the peduncle 4-6 cm long, from a slender spathe 7-8 mm long, below the apex of the ramicaul; floral bracts broadly infundibular, dilated, obtusely acuminate, 2 mm long, 2 mm wide; pedicels 1 mm long; ovary 1 mm long; **sepals** glabrous, greenish white, elliptical, obtuse, convex, free to near the base, the dorsal sepal 3.5 mm long, 2.2 mm wide, 3-veined, the lateral sepals oblique, 2.75 mm long, 2 mm wide, 3-veined; **petals** light purple, transversely oblong, transversely obtuse, shallowly concave, with the edge thickened, 0.6 mm long, 0.75 mm wide, 1-veined; **lip** light purple, subquadrate, 0.6 mm long, 0.75 mm wide, 0.3 mm deep, shallowly concave anteriorly, with the apex transverse with a short, obtuse apiculum, the bar broadly rounded, thick, minutely pubescent at the base, the base truncate, hinged to the base of the column; **column** stout, 0.75 mm long, 1 mm wide, the foot obsolescent, the anther and the bilobed stigma apical.

**Zamora-Chinchipe:** above Zumba, alt. ca. 1000 m, cultivated at Ecuagenera, Gualaceo, 5 Mar. 2001, *C. Luer* 19734 (Holotype: MO); Río Quebrada Honda, between Valladolid and Yangana, alt. 2200 m, 27 Mar. 1986, *D. D'Alessandro* & *H. Mendoza* 554 (MO); with questionable locality, cultivated at Ecuagenera, Gualaceo, 10 Nov. 2001, *A. Hirtz* 7873 (MO).

**Azuay:** near Gima, cultivated in Gima by Linder Suin 39, 6 Mar. 2001, *C. Luer* 19775 (MO).

This small species, apparently endemic in southernmost Ecuador, is similar to the group of species related to the *S. aprica*-complex. From them it is distinguished by the small habit with a slender, many-flowered raceme much longer than the leaves. The sepals are expanded, similar, elliptical, convex, and free except at the base. The petals are broadly oblong and single-veined. The lip is broader than long and the apex is broad with a short, obtuse apiculum.

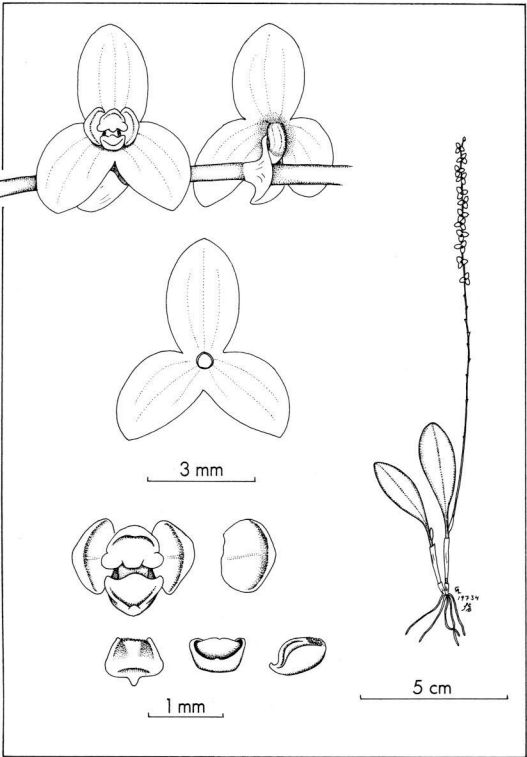


Fig. 166. *Stelis liberalis*