

Pleurothallis sphaerantha Luer, sp. nov.

Herba parva epiphytica caespitosa, caulibus secundariis filiformibus teretibus unifoliatis, folio ovato acuminato cordato, floribus fasciculatis solitariis successivis parvis subsphaericis citrinis vel purpureis, sepalo dorsali et synsepalo suborbicularibus profunde concavis, petalis aequilongis ovatis, acutis, labello ovato obtuso plano synsepalo decipulato.

Plant small, epiphytic, caespitose; roots slender, flexuous. Secondary stems filiform, terete, 4-7 cm long, with a slightly loose sheath below the middle and another 1-2 sheaths at the base, unifoliate. Leaf spreading, rigid, oblong-ovate, acuminate, acute, tridenticulate, base cordate, sessile, 3-4.5 X 1.5-2.8 cm. Inflorescence a fascicle of single flowers, 1-3, from a spathe, 6-8 mm long, at the base of the leaf, flowers small, globose, yellow or purple; floral bract tubular, 5 mm long, pedicel 5 mm long; ovary brown, verrucose, 1.5 mm long; dorsal sepal broadly ovate to suborbicular, obtuse, deeply concave, 4 X 4 mm spread, 3-veined; lateral sepals connate into a concave synsepal similar to the dorsal sepal, 4-veined; petals ovate, acute, 4 X 1.2 mm, 1-veined; lip ovate, obtuse, wedged within the synsepal, base broadly adherent to the base of the column, disc plain, 2.5 X 1.5 mm; column protruding above the lip, 1.5 X 1 mm, rostellum pointed.

ETYMOLOGY: From the Greek *sphaera*, "a ball, or a sphere," and *anthos*, "flower," in reference to the shape of the flower.

TYPE: ECUADOR: PASTAZA: epiphytic 20 km east of Puyo, alt. 500 m, 29 July 1975, C. Luer, G. Luer & Wilhelm 486 (HOLOTYPE: SEL).

DISTRIBUTION: Ecuador.

The leaves of this species are small, flat, rigid, and deeply cordate, superficially similar to those of many other species with small heart-shaped leaves. The flowers of *Pleurothallis sphaerantha* are more or less globose and do not spread widely; the dorsal sepal and the synsepal are orbicular and deeply concave which creates a spherical appearance. The petals are as long as the sepals, and sometimes they do not readily escape from the cavity of the flower. The comparatively large, ovate, featureless lip is wedged within the concave synsepal with an upturned apex so that the obtuse apex of the lip is caught just behind the apex of the synsepal. As the flower ages the lip becomes disengaged. The color of the flower varies from pure yellow to red-purple.

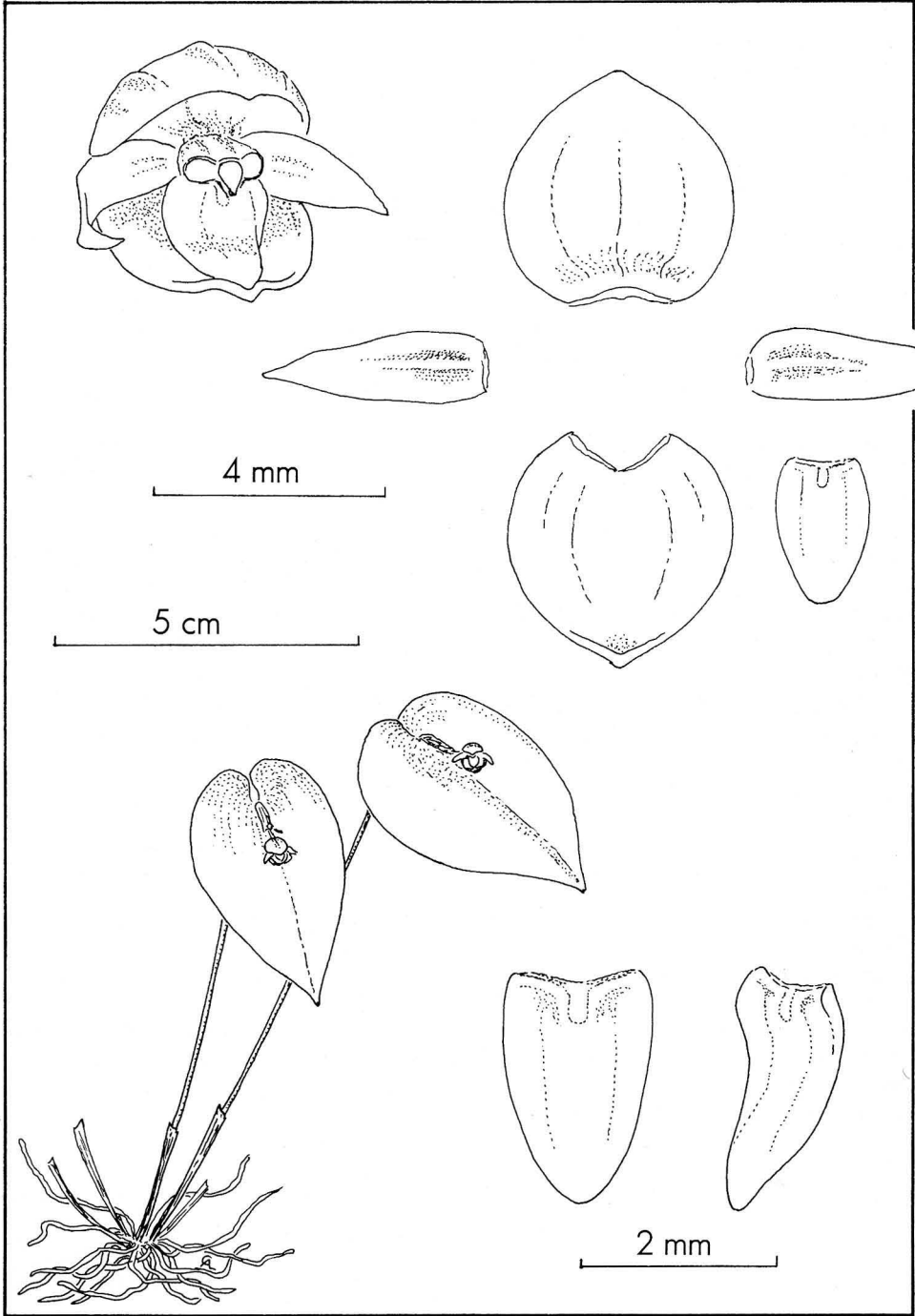


Figure 81. *PLEUROTHALLIS SPHAERANTHA* Luer