

Taxonomic Treatment

1. Psychilis atropurpurea (Willdenow) Sauleda,
comb. nov.

Basionym: Epidendrum atropurpureum

Willdenow, Sp. Pl. 4: 115. 1805.

Encyclia atropurpurea (Willdenow)

Schlechter, Orchideen, 208. 1914. Type:
In the absence of any specimens verifiable
as type material, the illustration cited by
Willdenow (Plumier, Pl. Amer. 8: t. 178,
f. 1. 1758) is here designated as the
lectotype.

PLANT epiphytic, to 2.4 m tall. ROOTS velamentous.
PSEUDOBULBS elongate, fusiform to ovoid, apically
attenuate, to 16 cm long, 3.5 cm thick, to 5-leaved.
LEAVES rigid, distichous, articulated with the leaf
sheaths, linear-lanceolate to linear-oblong, subacute,
margin entire, to 45 cm long, 3.0 cm wide.
INFLORESCENCE to 2.2 m long, peduncle erect, racemes
erect, rachis to 7.0 cm long, to 18-flowered. FLORAL

BRACTS broadly ovate, acute to acuminate, to 2 mm wide, 1 mm long. PEDICEL to 5.5 cm long. SEPALS and PETALS pale green to greenish-brown, tipped with reddish-brown, reverse side of segments rose-carmine. SEPALS oblanceolate, obtuse, to 2.0 cm long, 0.7 cm wide. PETALS spatulate to oblanceolate, obtuse to 1.9 cm long, 0.5 cm wide. LABELLUM to 2.4 cm long, 1.4 cm wide; lateral lobes obovate, obtuse, erect, concave, clasping column, yellow to reddish-purple with reddish-brown radiating lines; midlobe obovate, emarginate, with a broad, oblong, canaliculate callus, apex terminating in three, lateral, erect keels extending onto disc, midlobe white, streaked with purple or reddish-purple, with a white margin and a white triangular spot on disc in front of column. COLUMN rose-carmine to reddish-purple, apex white or yellow, to 1.4 cm long, 0.5 cm wide; anther yellow. CAPSULE ellipsoid, to 2.6 cm long, 1.3 cm thick.

Distribution: Endemic to central Hispaniola.

Flowers sporadically throughout the year, mainly from December to May.

Epidendrum atropurpureum described in 1805 by Willdenow, was reduced to synonymy under Epidendrum bifidum Aublet by Lindley (1853). The nomenclatural history was complicated by the misapplication of the name E. atropurpureum to a different and common Central American species by Ames et al. (1936). Dressler (1964) recognized that the Plumier plate upon which E. atropurpureum was based did not represent the Central American species. He determined the correct name for the Central American species to be Encyclia cordigera (Kunth) Dressler. Dressler (1964), like Lindley before him, failed to recognize that E. atropurpureum and E. bifidum are two closely related but distinct species occurring in Hispaniola and incorrectly treated E. atropurpureum as a nomen confusum. The two Plumier plates, representing the types of E. atropurpureum and E. bifidum, although crude and diagrammatic, clearly differentiate between the two. The lateral lobes of the labellum, one of the most important diagnostic characters which separates the two species, are clearly illustrated. The lateral lobes of the labellum of P. atropurpurea are short and clasp the column on either side near the base while those of P. bifida are considerably longer and embrace the column, extending over and almost concealing it. Psychilis atropurpurea is abundant throughout central Hispaniola while P. bifida is rare, found only along the northern coast of Haiti.

Vegetatively, P. atropurpurea is similar to and may be confused with Psychilis dodii Sauleda. Florally these two species differ in the shape of the callus on the midlobe of the labellum and the shape of the disc of the labellum. Psychilis dodii has a rhombic callus and an orbicular disc while P. atropurpurea has an oblong callus and an obovate disc.