

VANILLA Sw.

As of this writing, five species of the genus Vanilla Sw. have been found in Nicaragua. Vanilla planifolia Andr. and V. Pompona Schiede have previously been recorded from the area, as noted by L. O. Williams in his Enumeration published in 1956 (Ceiba, Volume 5).

Critical exploration by A. H. Heller has brought to light Vanilla Pfaviana Rchb.f., previously known from Mexico, British Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica; V. odorata Presl, previously known only from Ecuador and Bolivia; and an unusual plant, new to science, which is here described in his honor.

VANILLA HELLERI A.D.Hawkes, sp.nov.

Planta scandens, elongata, caulis flexuosis, subquadratis. Foliis carnosius, oblongo-ellipticis, ad apicem abrupte acumina-
tis contractis. Floribus pro genere parvis, sub-patentibus. Labellum fortiter 3-lobis, lobo medio appendicis elongatis retrorsis complanatis ornato. Columna gracilis, sub-clavellata, infra stigmatato pilis gracilis glandulosis ornatis.

Plant scandent, elongate, the rooting stems flexuose, subquadrate, sulcate on two sides, 1 cm in diameter, dark olive-green. Leaves 1 - 14 cm apart, fleshy, 12 - 14 cm long, 3.5 - 4.5 cm broad, oblong-elliptic, abruptly contracted to an acuminate apex 1 cm long, below abruptly contracted to a sulcate petiole 1 cm long. Inflorescence 10 cm long, with an almost obsolete peduncle, subumbellate, bearing a succession of up to 20 flowers. Flowers small for the genus, about 6 cm in diameter, semi-spreading, short-lived, the sepals whitish with underside of upper half greenish, the petals whitish, the lip bright yellow with orange appendages on the midlobe, the column white. Floral bracts triangular-ovate, dark green, 7 mm long and 4 mm broad. Pedicellate ovary slender, 5 cm long and 3 mm in diameter, white with the tip

of the ovary green. Sepals 4 cm long, slightly concave, with 7 - 9 nerves, the dorsal oblanceolate, 1.4 cm broad above the middle, the laterals 1.4 cm broad at middle, oblong-elliptic, oblique, sub-obtuse. Petals 4 cm long and 1.3 cm broad, oblong-elliptic, obtuse, set with thick 3-nerved median carinae on both surfaces. Lip strongly 3-lobed, 4 cm long and 3 cm across the lateral lobes when spread out, adnate to base of column and without a claw; midlobe densely covered with retrorse complanate elongated appendages; lateral lobes multi-nerved, with entire margins; a penicillate crest is located in the exact center of the lip, and from this point to the base there is a slightly raised verruciform callus which becomes rather dense and more tuberculate at the base. Column slender, rather straight, sub-clavellate, with fine glandular hairs extending for a short distance just below the stigmatic orifice.

NICARAGUA: Dept. Chontales: 2 miles south of La Libertad on the road to Santo Tomás, growing as a vine on a wild avocado (Persea sp.) tree, alt. 1900 feet, April 1962, A. H. Heller 7946 (Type in Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium of Harvard University).

This interesting, small-flowered Vanilla has no close Central American allies. The structure of the lip in particular is most distinctive.