Zygopetalum

**Description**: *Zygopetalum* flowers are distinguished by greenish sepals and petals, both heavily

marked with purple splotches, a spreading lip usually white with purple radiating stripes, and a

pronounced yoke-like bulge on the lip’s base. **Flower**: Large flowers are usually strongly

fragrant, with a scent resembling hyacinths. The genus name fuses the Greek words for “yoke”

and “petal,” referring to the raised, crescent-shaped bulge (callus), scored with parallel furrows

like a plowed field. In some flowers, this callus better resembles the rear half of a horse saddle.

The column is broad, robust, usually with a blunt yellow tip. **Plant**: Most species have egg-

shaped pseudobulbs, becoming grooved with age, wrapped in brownish fibrous sheaths. Long

leaves emerge from the pseudobulb tip and are deciduous in dry months. Leaves are narrow at

the base, but broaden farther up and exhibit prominent veins. Inflorescences arise from the

pseudobulb base bearing up to 8 flowers.

**Distribution and Diversity**: Some 15 species flourish terrestrially, or as epiphytes, in lower and

middle-altitude wet forests, from Venezuela to Peru and Brazil.

**Ecology and History**: *Zygopetalum* plants, sometimes called Ladybird Orchids, probably are

visited by male euglossine bees seeking fragrances produced on the lip. The violet petal

markings may help attract pollinators, as yet unidentified, that respond strongly to visual cues.