**Masdevallia** Ruiz & Pavon

*Fl. Peruv. Prodr.* 122,*t.* 27 (1794)

ETYMOLOGY: ln honor of José Masdeval (x~l8Ol), a Spanish physician in the court of King Charles lll (1759-88) of Spain. He was an amateur botanist and he pioneered the hygienic methods used to treat fevers then rampant in the principality of Catalna.

TYPE SPECIES: *Masdivallia uniflora* Ruiz & Pavon

There are over five hundred of these unusual or less commonly found lithophytes or even terrestrials are found in cool, moist, low to usually upper elevation, hill and montane forests. Their range extends from Mexico and Belize to Bolivia, the Guianas, Venezuela and eastern Brazil with the greatest diversity found in Colombia. These plants have short, erect stems, subtended by thin, dry, over» lapping sheaths, each with a solitary, small to large, fleshy to leathery, oblong to narrow leaf. The several, solitary-flowered inflorescences have flowers varying in size from tiny to gigantic (1 ft/30 cm) tall. These showy, distinctive, triangular or tubular flowers are extraordinary for their amazing range of shapes, as well as the variety and beauty of the colors. The sepals, more or less unite at the base, forming a sepaline tube, and narrow toward the tips forming short to long-tails. They usually have small, narrow petals. The small to minute, straight or recurved, entire or trilobed lip is either stalked or shortly clawed. The flowers have a short, erect or curved, sometimes winged column that has a tiny segment tucked away in the sepaline tube.

Epiphytic, lithophytic, or terrestrial, caespitose to repent herbs. Stem erect or rarely descending, enclosed at base by imbricating sheaths, with an annulus. Laf coriaceous, elliptical to obovate, acute to rounded, petiolate. Inﬂorescence solitary-flowered or racemose, the peduncle terete or triquetrous; ﬂoral bracts tubular to cucullate. Flower resupinate. Sepals membranous or ﬂeshy, showy, triangular to obovate, acuminate to obtuse, often caudate, free or variously connate. Petals reduced, elliptical to oblong, acute to rounded or dentate, usually with a longitudinal callus and a rounded projection (‘tooth’) at the base. Labellum ligulate to pandurate, acute to rounded, disc often with two longitudinal calli, base hinged to a minute extension of the column foot. Column semiterete, hooded", with a foot; anther apical, incumbent, pollinia two; Stigma entire. Ovary trivalvate. Capsule elipsoid.