*Lepanthes* Swartz

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ETYMOLOGY: Greek for scale, small or bark and ﬂower. Referring to the minute, scale-like ﬂowers of many of the species.

LECTOTYPE: *Lepanthes ovalis (*Swatz) Fawcett & Rendle

Over nine hundred of these tufted, sympodial epiphytes or lithophytes principally are found in low to upper elevation, hill to montane forests, woodlands and scrub from Cuba to Trinidad, southern Mexico to Bolivia, Venezuela, the Guianas and northern Brazil (Para and Amapa). These dwarf to minute, cluster forming plants have slender to tufted stems, subtended by a series of tubular, ribbed, more or less overlapping, leaf sheaths. The leathery leaves sometimes have a velvety texture and often have colorful, attractive markings. The several, solitary or few-flowered inflorescences, often borne flat against the leaf surface, have a tiny to small, brightly colored flower, opening widely so as to appear almost flat. The flowers are short-lived, lasting for only two days. The minute, broad, variously shaped petals are almost always more brightly colored than the larger, wide spreading sepals. The entire, bilobed or trilobed lip is highly specialized and varies tremendously in its design and size. The small side lobes surround the slender, wingless, footless column and the minute midlobe is variously shaped and often hairy.