*Pleurothallis* R. Brown

*Hortus Kew., ed 2* **5**:211(1813).

ETYMOLOGY: Greek for side or rib and blossom or branch. Perhaps in reference to the many, rib~like stems that arise in dense tufts in most of the species.

TYPE SPECIES: *Pleurothallis ruscifolia* (Jacquin) R. Brown

Without a doubt the largest orchid genus in the New World, it is estimated to be in excess of hundred, sympodial epiphytes, or terrestrials. These species are extremely diverse in their vegetative habit and it is not uncommon to encounter a dozen or more different species on just a single tree trunk. They are found in low to upper elevation, hill woodlands and montane forests from the southeastern United States (southern Florida), southern Mexico to Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia to Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay to northern Argentina with a few species scattered in the Caribbean basin. These plants range from minute, moss-like, erect plants to bushy structures, three feet (0.9 m) in height and have narrow, rib-like, solitary leafed stems that tend to grow in dense clusters. The stems are subtended by tubular sheaths. The numerous, short to sometimes long, solitary to few-flowered inflorescence, borne from the leaf axils, has tiny flowers for the most part with extremely diverse colors and shapes. The sepals are usually larger than the petals. The small, entire, trilobed to five-lobed lip, attached to the base of the column, is tongue- shaped to ovate and has a pointed to rounded tip. The flowers have an erect to curved, slender to stout, winged to wingless column that is with or without a foot, whose anther can be exposed or hooded. The footed column can have a knob-like, stout foot. But the whole flower in most instances must be seen under magnification to be studied and appreciated.