Bulbophyllum

Thouars *Hist. Orchid.* Table 3, sub 3u, tt. 93-110 (1822)

ETYMOLOGY: Greek for bulb and leaf. Referring to the single-noded pseudobulb with its

solitary leaf.

LECTOTYPE*: Bulbophyllum nutans* (Thouars) Thours, Hist. Orchid.: t. 107 (1822)

The largest genus of the entire orchid family with an estimated one thousand, eight hundred

extraordinarily shaped, polymorphic, creeping epiphytes, lithophytes or rare terrestrials. They

vary in size from minute, often forming large mats, to often massive, climbers. They have a wide

range of habitats throughout the tropical and subtropical regions of the globe. African species

have small but occasionally quite striking plants and flowers. The American species have stiff,

uninteresting plants with small, drab flowers. Asian species have multi-leaved plants usually

with delightful flowers. But the greatest diversity is found in New Guinea. These plants have

small to large, single-noded, stout pseudobulbs each with one to two leaves that develop along a

creeping rhizome and have basal inﬂorescences. The enormously diverse flowers are often

furnished with a strong fragrance, sometimes pleasant or sometimes fetid, but almost always

suffocating in its intensity. Some flowers are so tiny they are only visible with the help of a

magnifying lens. The dorsal sepal is free, the lateral sepals are often united and attached to the

column foot, and the petals are usually smaller than sepals. The flowers possess an extraordinary

articulated, often hairy, thin to rigid, entire or trilobed lip that is sensitive to even the slightest

touch or breeze. Its function is to unbalance the visiting insect and tumble it against the short,

erect column, thus the unsuspecting insect becomes attached to the pollinia and carries it to

another flower. The dazzling, sensuous floral colors range through virtually every hue

imaginable except blue.