Ophrys apifera Hudson 1762

Common Name Bee Orchid, Ophrys Abeille (France), Bienen-Ragwurz (Germany), Vesparia (Italy)

Synonyms Too many to list

Description

Stem 15-50 crn tall; basal leaves lanceolate, acute. Inflorescence laxly 2- to 10-flowered. Flowers 2-3 cm across; sepals pale to deep pink; petals small, greenish; lip 12—15 mm long, convex, the pointed tip reflexed, with small, hairy side lobes; midlobe velvety red-brown with U-shaped

yellow markings. Several forms and varieties have been described. Flowering rnidspring - rnidsummer. Grassland and scrub, usually on calcareous soil; a colonizer of open habitats such as old quarries and road verges Europe, North Africa, Near East. *Ophrys apifera* grows to a height of 15–50 centimeters (6–20 in). This hardy orchid develops small rosettes of leaves in autumn. They continue to grow slowly during winter. Basal leaves are ovate or oblong-lanceolate, upper leaves and bracts are ovate-lanceolate and sheathing. The plant blooms from mid-April to July producing a spike composed from one to twelve flowers. The flowers have large sepals, with a central green rib and their colour varies from white to pink, while petals are short, pubescent, yellow to greenish. The labellum is trilobed, with two pronounced humps on the hairy lateral lobes, the median lobe is hairy and similar to the abdomen of a bee. It is quite variable in the pattern of coloration, but usually brownish-red with yellow markings. The gynostegium is at right angles, with an elongated apex.

Distribution This is a terrestrial, small to medium sized, cold growing species from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Ireland, Great Britain, Portugal, Spain, Balearic Islands, France, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Albania, eastern Aegean Islands, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Crimea, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iraq and Iran and occurs in moist grasslands and wastelands at elevations around 1800 meters.

Hybrids *Ophrys apifera* has only 2 hybrids. It was crossed with *O. fuciflora* in 1999 producing Ophrys Albertina. Again in 1999, Albertina was then crossed with *Anacamptis coriophora* resulting in Ophramptis Cold Fusion. Neither of the hybrids has been awarded.

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