

Encyclia Hooker 1828

SUBFAMILY Epidendroideae, TRIBE Epidendreae, SUBTRIBE Laeliinae.

ETYMOLOGY: From Greek enkyklo, encircle, referring to how the lip side lobes clasp the column.

TYPE SPECIES: *Encyclia viridiflora* Hooker 1828

SYNONYMS: *Amphiglottis* Salisb. 1812; *Aulizeum* Lindley ex Stein 1892; *Dinema* Lindley 1831; *Doxosma* Raf. 1838; *Epicladium* Small 1913; *Hormidium* Lindley ex Heynht. 1841; *Microstylis* Nutt. 1822; *Sulpitia* Raf. 1838

TYPE SPECIES:

DESCRIPTION: They are mostly epiphytes and are found in seasonally dry forests from sea level to 2000 meters. They have apical inflorescence that have flowers smaller than 4 centimeters in diameter. The column has no foot and is not attached to the lip for most of its length, and there are 4 hard pollina attached to the caudicles.¹

Encyclia can be identified by the Dumbo-like ears framing the column and the garlic-shaped pseudobulbs. Flower: Sepals and petals are similar, but flower color and size varies. The lip, rarely fused to the column but usually free, extends large wing-shaped lobes alongside the column base. In some species the wings encircle the column, an arrangement for which the genus is named. The column is thin and long, often flaring laterally. Plant: Clustered pseudobulbs resemble Russian onion domes, or chocolate kisses. Each produces several fleshy or stiff leaves of varying shape. Inflorescences arise from on top of the pseudobulbs, bearing many flowers, sometimes reaching 3 or more feet (0.9 m) in length. Similar: *Prosthechea* & *Epidendrum* lack garlic-shaped pseudobulbs; lip and column are fully fused.⁵

Epiphytic, occasionally lithophytic or terrestrial, plants with round, ovoid, or spindle-shaped pseudobulbs, 1- to 3-leaved at apex. Inflorescences terminal, usually branched, 1- to many-flowered, Without a spathe. Flowers resupinate, often scented; sepals and petals usually subsimilar; lip free or partly joined to the column at base, trilobed, side lobes usually clasping the column, midlobe with a callus usually of 2 ridges. Column winged, pollinia 4, equal in size. Capsule ellipsoid, sometimes warty. Most species of *Encyclia* were originally described under *Epidendrum*, so there seems little point in giving these names as synonyms. Many species previously treated as *Encyclia*, and often well-known under that name, are now included in *Prosthechea*.⁴

DISTRIBUTION: The genus is made up of 188 species that spread through all of tropical America including the West Indies.¹

More than 150 species of *Encyclia* thrive as epiphytes in low-elevation dry forest, from Florida and Mexico to Paraguay.⁵

ECOLOGY and HISTORY: Most species are pollinated by large bees, especially carpenter bees. The insect alights on the lip, which droops under its weight, opening a path beneath the column and between the lip's wings. Upon backing out, the bee picks up or deposits pollinia. Many of these species attract pollinators by means of fragrance, perhaps none so intoxicating as *E. phoenicea* flowers that smell mouthwateringly of chocolate. A few species are capable of self-pollination if they occur where traditional pollinators are absent or at the edge of the pollinator's range. Favoring seasonally dry forests, these orchids show a number of adaptations to surviving in nutrient-poor environments. Species such as *E. cordigera* and *E. alata* form relationships with ants, bribing the insects with nectar in exchange for defense from herbivores. Such ant—plant relationships are significantly more common in dry regions, where scarce food resources demand greater protection. The roots of *E. tampensis* also take up nutrients from the host tree bark, uncommon among orchids. Sadly, the original type species, *E. viridiflora*, from the Atlantic Forest of Brazil, is now extinct due to rampant destruction of this ecosystem.⁵

CULTIVATION: Encyclias grow in a range of habitats in the wild. Many species grow in hot, dry situations, while others grow in rain forest. Relatively few grow at high altitudes. Most species will grow in intermediate conditions, either potted in a standard epiphyte mixture, preferably in a rather small pot, or mounted on bark or a tree fern block. Most need only light shade and should be given a dry rest in winter.⁴

References

¹ www.orchidspecies.com

² **Aldridge, Peggy. 2008.** *An Illustrated Dictionary of Orchid Genera*. Selby Botanical Garden Press.

³ **Chase MW. 2006.** Tribe Epidendreae. In: Pridgeon AM, Cribb PJ, Chase MW, Rasmussen F, eds. *Genera Orchidacearum, Vol. 4*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 443-449.

⁴ **la Croix, Isobyl. 2008.** *The New Encyclopedia of Orchids*. Timber Press

⁵ **Meisel, Kaufmann, Pupulin 2014.** *Orchids of Tropical America*. Cornell University Press

⁶ **Withner, Carl L. 1998.** *The Cattleyas and Their Relatives: Volume V*. Timber Press