

**RECENTLY IN FLOWER IN THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS**

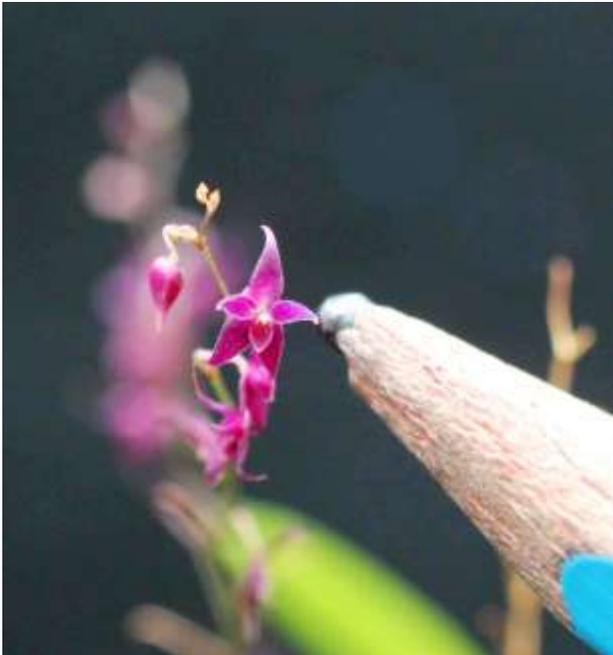
*Lepanthopsis astrophora* 'Stalky'

Synonyms *Pleurothallis astrophora* Rchb. f. ex Kraenzl. 1892

*Lepanthopsis* (leh-pan-THOP-siss) is a genus comprising of around 38 species mostly from the Andes and Caribbean. The name refers to its similarity to *Lepanthes* as the stems are also ringed by sheaths. Many members of this genus have many small flowers that will bloom simultaneously on the inflorescence while others will at least have several flowers open at the same time.

This particular species *L. astrophora* 'Stalky' is a native of coastal Venezuela and Colombia at elevations of up to 1500 meters. It is miniature orchid requiring temperatures which are intermediate to hot. It is an epiphyte with erect slender ramicauls which are covered by approximately six sheaths, carrying a single erect subacute leaf.

Each flower is about 3/16" [4 mm] and blooms in the fall and spring on a terminal, erect, many flowered, racemose inflorescence. Each inflorescence can have up to six flowers that open simultaneously and are held well above the leaves as is seen in the photos.



When I was trawling through various websites looking at this genus I found one blog where the owner claimed to have a plant that once produced up to 650 flowers on 70 flower spikes. That must have been an impressive sight and something we'd all like to achieve.

It's common name is 'The Star-Bearing Inflorescence' due to it's minute star shaped flowers. This tiny little plant is grown under lock and key in the intermediate nursery orchid house. Unfortunately due to it's tiny size the plant is not on public display. It is watered and fed regularly during the growing season. It is fairly rare and not so easily purchased, I found it online for \$26.99 [€20] which isn't cheap either. There are other *Lepanthopsis* species that are more affordable and possibly a little easier to grow.

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