



Things are seldom what they seem: the nomenclature of *Polystachya masayensis* (Orchidaceae)

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Abstract

We clarified the identity and nomenclature of *Polystachya masayensis*. A new combination is proposed, *Polystachya elatior*, to recognize at the species level the previously described *P. masayensis* var. *elatior*. This taxon features a central lobe of the labellum that is longer than wide, as opposed to the broader than long midlobe of *P. masayensis*. The taxonomic rearrangement includes the placement of *P. cavanayensis* into the synonymy of *P. masayensis*. Both species are sympatric in Central America and they have been confused and identified as *P. masayensis* throughout the taxonomic literature and in herbaria; however, they are easily recognized based on their labellum structure. We also included a drawing depicting labellum outlines for both species and a key for the identification of the Central American species of the genus.

Resumen

Se clarifica la identidad y la nomenclatura de *Polystachya masayensis*. Se propone una nueva combinación, *Polystachya elatior*, para reconocer al nivel específico la anteriormente descrita *P. masayensis* var. *elatior*. Este taxón presenta un lóbulo central del labelo que es más largo que ancho, contrario a *P. cavanayensis* que tiene el lóbulo central más ancho que largo. El re-arreglo taxonómico incluye el reconocer a *P. cavanayensis* dentro de la sinonimia de *P. masayensis*. Ambas especies son simpátricas en Centro América y han sido confundidas e identificadas como *P. masayensis* en la literatura taxonómica y en los herbarios; sin embargo, son fácilmente reconocidas por la forma del labelo. Se incluyen también una figura con los dibujos de los labelos de ambas especies y una clave para la identificación de las especies centroamericanas del género.

Introduction

Polystachya (Hooker 1824: t. 103) is a nomenclaturally complex genus with ca. 400 names available for ca. 200 recognized species (Davies *et al.* 2002, Govaerts *et al.* 2009, Mytnik-Ejsmont 2011). Kraenzlin (1926) presented the first taxonomic revision of the genus and, recently, Mytnik-Ejsmont (2011) updated it. Russell *et al.* (2010) challenged some of the sections erected by Kraenzlin (1926) and found some of them to be non-monophyletic; the sections proposed by Mytnik-Ejsmont (2011) in the most recent infrageneric taxonomic proposal have not been challenged. Beyond the mentioned generic revisions, American species are yet to be fully understood in both their taxonomy and phylogenetic relationships.

During the revision of the American species of *Polystachya*, we faced a nomenclatural problem associated with one of the most characteristic species of *Polystachya* in America, *P. masayensis* (Reichenbach 1855: 217). This name has been applied to all specimens bearing a hispid-puberulous, pedicellate ovary known to occur in Panama (Williams 1946), Nicaragua (Hamer 1984), and Costa Rica (Dressler 2003). However, this character is shared with the entity described as *P. cavanayensis* Garay & Dunsterville (Dunsterville & Garay 1976: 378) from Venezuela. Until now there has been an apparent clear separation between the species *P.*