

## THE GENUS *CHRISTENSONIA* HAAGER

ERIC A. CHRISTENSON

1646 Oak Street, Sarasota, Florida 34236, U.S.A.

**ABSTRACT.** The monotypic Vietnamese genus *Christensonia* Haager is discussed and illustrated by a detailed line drawing. A warm-growing, lowland plant, *C. vietnamica* is an exciting addition to the tropical horticulture as well as a taxonomic bridge between the genera *Aerides*, *Rhynchostylis*, and *Vanda*.

**RESUMEN.** Se discute y se ilustra con un dibujo de plumilla detallado el género monotípico vietnamita *Christensonia* Haager. Una planta de clima cálido, nativa de tierras bajas, *C. vietnamica* es un interesante aporte a la horticultura tropical, así como un puente taxonómico entre los géneros *Aerides*, *Rhynchostylis* y *Vanda*.

**KEY WORDS:** Orchidaceae, Aeridinae, *Christensonia*, *Christensonia vietnamica*, Vietnam

In 1993 Czech botanist Jiří (George) Haager kindly honored me by describing a new genus of Vietnamese orchids *Christensonia* (Haager 1993). In that account and later mention of the genus (Christenson 1996), space consideration did not allow publication of an excellent line drawing of the type plant by Haager. This article rectifies this situation.

A member of the subtribe Aeridinae (synonym: Sarcanthinae), *Christensonia* exhibits a mosaic of characters found in the closely related genera *Aerides* Loureiro, *Rhynchostylis* Blume, and *Vanda* Jones.

*Christensonia* differs from *Aerides* by having no column foot. And unlike most species of *Aerides*, the lip of *Christensonia* is not flexibly hinged below the lateral lobes allowing deflexion of the lip by pollinators. *Christensonia* is similar to *Rhynchostylis*, especially in having a narrowly linear stipe to the pollinarium, but differs by having a clearly three-lobed lip. In addition, plants of *Christensonia* are miniature and few-flowered compared with *Rhynchostylis*.

*Christensonia* is perhaps most similar to *Vanda*. In particular, *Christensonia* shares two characteristics with *Vanda*. First, the spurs are straight and in the same plane as the midlobe of the lip. Second, the only flexible portion of the lip is the base of the midlobe.

The green and white flowers of *Christensonia* are unlike the generally white and rose-purple patterns seen in *Aerides* and *Rhynchostylis*. However, they are similar to some species of *Vanda*, especially those of *Vanda* section *Cristatae* Lindley which are sometimes segregated as the genus *Trudelia* Garay (q.v., Christenson 1994). Nothing is known of the pollination biology of *Christensonia* nor the significance, if any, of the green and white floral coloration.

Plants of *Christensonia* have entered horticulture and are readily available commercially in the United States. A plant cultivated in Sarasota, Florida, for several years has proven to be vigorous and trouble-free to grow. Its first flowering was on a plant of the similar size to the one shown in the drawing. Plants in the Czech Republic and the United States flower in July. Its flowering season in nature is unknown.

***Christensonia vietnamica*** J.R. Haager, *Orchid Digest* 57(1): 40. 1993.

**TYPE.** Southern Vietnam, Prov. Khanh Hoa, Ninh Tay village, 100 m, April 1989, collected by O. Dubec and J. Jurak, flowered in cultivation in Prague, *PR 11392* (holotype, PR). FIG. 1.

Monopodial epiphytes. *Stems* to 30 cm long. *Leaves* strap-shaped, erose at apex, to 6 x 1 cm.

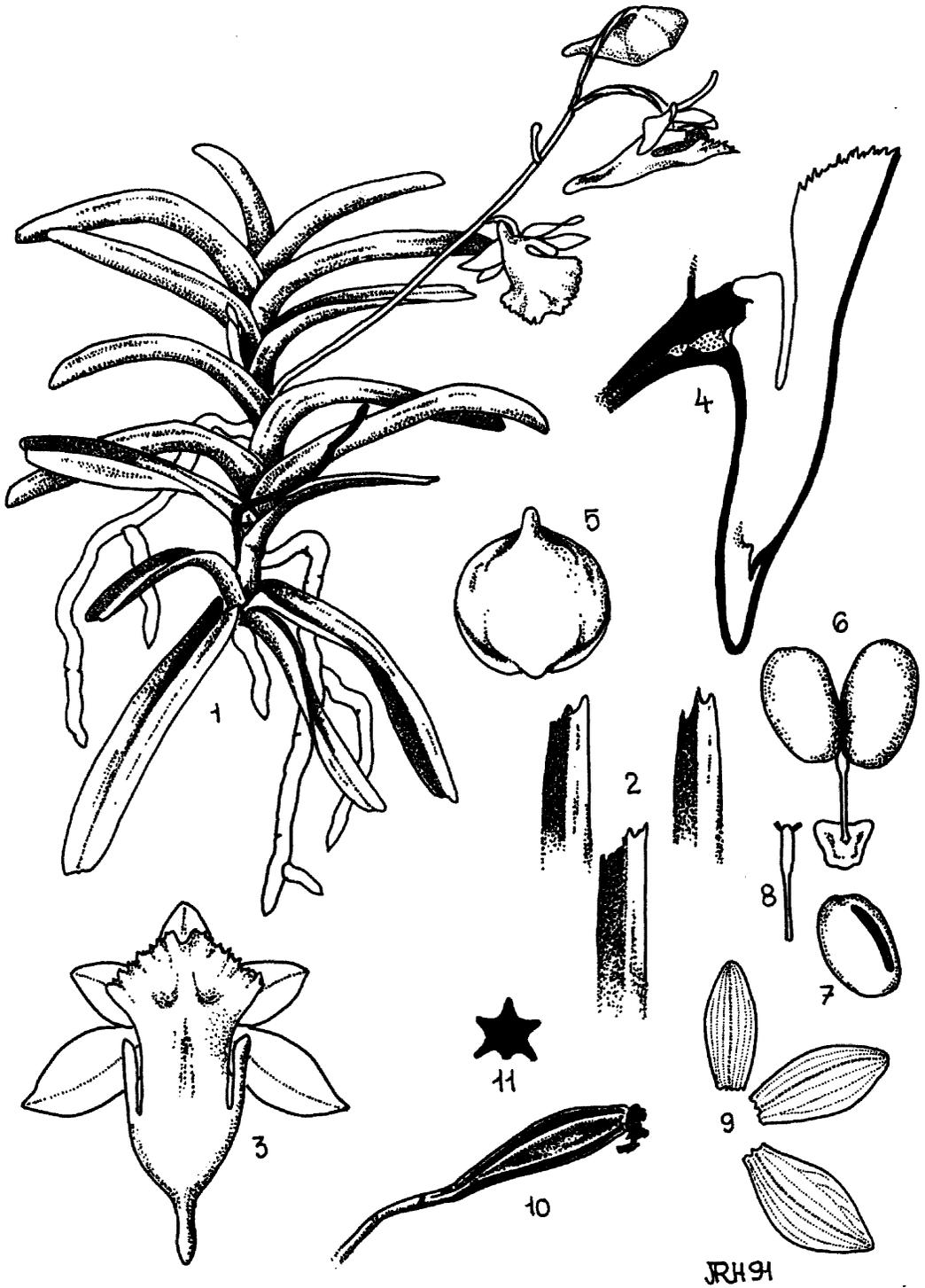


Figure 1. *Christensonia vietnamica* J.R. Haager. 1. Habit. 2. Leaf apices. 3. Flower from below. 4. Longitudinal section of the lip. 5. Anther. 6. Pollinarium. 7. Pollinium. 8. Stipe. 9. Sepals and petal. 10. Fruit. 11. Cross-section of the ovary. Drawing of the type plant by Jiri Haager.

*Inflorescences* 1-3, erect, few-flowered, to 8 cm long. *Flowers* 3-5, resupinate, somewhat nodding, the sepals, petals and lateral lobes of the lip yellow-green, the midlobe of the lip white. Sepals and petals subequal, to 1.6 x 0.7 cm, the *dorsal sepal* oblong-elliptic, obtuse, convex, the *lateral sepals* obliquely elliptic-obovate, obtuse, convex, the *petals* elliptic, obtuse, somewhat incurved. *Lip* three-lobed, to 3.4 cm long from the apex of the spur to the apex of the midlobe, the lateral lobes rectangular, obtuse, to 0.7 x 0.3 cm, the midlobe fan-shaped with a broad claw, with finely toothed and undulate margins, to 1.8 x 1.6 cm, the spur with small, scale-like, internal glandular processes

below the apex. *Column* very short, to 0.3 cm long. *Pedicel* and *ovary* six-winged, twisted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. I graciously thank Jiri Haager for honoring me with this commemoration and for lending the accompanying illustration for this article.

LITERATURE CITED

Christenson, E.A. 1994. Taxonomy of the Aeridinae with an infrageneric classification of *Vanda* Jones ex R. Br. Proc. 14th World Orch. Conf. 206-216.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1996. Sarcanthinae genera 22: *Christensonia*. *Orchids* 65(3): 282-283.

Haager, J.R. 1993. Some new taxa of orchids from Southern Vietnam. *Orchid Digest* 57(1): 39-44.