

24. PAPHIOPEDILUM DIANTHUM

Paphiopedilum dianthum was originally described by Tang & Wang in 1940 based on the type collected by C.W. Wang at Mengtze in Yunnan and a second specimen from Tsingsi Hsien (Chinghsi), Kwangsi (Guangxi) Province of south-west China. *P. dianthum* and its close ally the epiphytic *P. parishii* are the only two Chinese green-leaved species with two- or more-flowered inflorescences. *P. dianthum* has large coriaceous dark green leaves up to 50 × 5 cm, and long glabrous inflorescences usually bearing two to five flowers. The flowers are green with a white margin to the dorsal sepal. Large plants can bear up to 15 growths but six or seven is more usual. It differs from *P. parishii* in having a floral axis that is very shortly pubescent, glabrous bracts, a glabrous ovary, a white-margined dorsal sepal, less heavily spotted petals and somewhat larger lip.

In the first edition I treated this species as a variety of *P. parishii* because plants collected in northern Thailand in recent years were said to be intermediate between *P. parishii* and *P. dianthum*. However, examination of a great deal of living material has shown that they are all attributable to the former and no intermediates have been found.

The earliest collection of *P. dianthum* was made by W. Hancock (no. 582) at Mengtze (Mengtze), Yunnan in November 1894 at 1800–2100 m, and is preserved in the Kew Herbarium. Although *P. dianthum* was described in 1940 living plants were not seen in cultivation outside China until over forty years later.

In the past few years Chinese plants of *P. dianthum*, all recently collected, have begun to appear in the trade in some quantity. It is also popular in cultivation in China and continues to be collected from the wild. Large plants on sale, said to have been collected in SE Yunnan, were being offered for sale in 1996 in the Kunming Flower Market.

I have seen *P. dianthum* in several localities in SE Yunnan, SW Guizhou and W Guangxi Provinces of China. It can form substantial colonies extending over up to 600 sq.m. and with numbers ranging from less than ten to many hundreds of plants. Four large colonies examined in Guizhou and Guangxi were growing on north or more or less north-facing small cliffs and steep rocks just below the summits of karst limestone hills at 1000 to 1230 m. Mark (1987) reported a similar habitat on limestone bluffs. Plants grow in deep shade of laurels and oaks. The pH readings at three sites examined ranged from 7.5 to 7.86. In one site it grew intermixed with *P. micranthum*.

A fourth site was rather unusual in that it was on a cliff on one side of a



Fig. 50. Close-up of flower of *Paphiopedilum dianthum*. (Photos: P. Cribb)