

5. PAPHIOPEDILUM EMERSONII

The last few years have witnessed the appearance in cultivation of a number of extraordinary new discoveries of slipper orchids from China, notably *P. micranthum*, *P. armeniacum* and *P. malipoense*. All have boldly tessellated leaves which are heavily purple-spotted on their lower surfaces. Vegetatively and in floral features they are obviously closely related to the Vietnamese species *P. delenatii* and Karasawa & Saito (1982) have therefore created for them a distinct subgenus *Parvisepalum*.

Remarkable as these introductions were, that of *P. emersonii*, originally exported from China via Hong Kong to Japan and the U.S.A., was perhaps the most surprising of all. It is undoubtedly allied to the other species of *Parvisepalum* and both morphological and molecular evidence suggests that it belongs there. It has a flower with broad obovate to almost circular petals, a lip not unlike that of *P. delenatii* and a staminode akin to that of *P. armeniacum*. Yet its leaves are unique in the subgenus, often entirely lacking tessellation on the upper surface or dense purple markings beneath. Again, they appear relatively longer than other *Parvisepalum* species and not unlike those of the Philippine species *P. adductum* which is in a different subgenus. The flower of *P. emersonii* is in shape and size not unlike that of *P. bellatulum* and *P. godefroyae* in the subgenus *Brachypetalum* in which *P. delenatii* was originally placed. Despite these similarities *P. emersonii* clusters with the other *Parvisepalum* species in both the molecular and morphological cladistic analyses and its place in the subgenus is unequivocal.

Paphiopedilum emersonii is characterised by its green, plain or very obscurely tessellated leaves and large, whitish flower, with a pale yellow lip and yellow and red staminode, borne

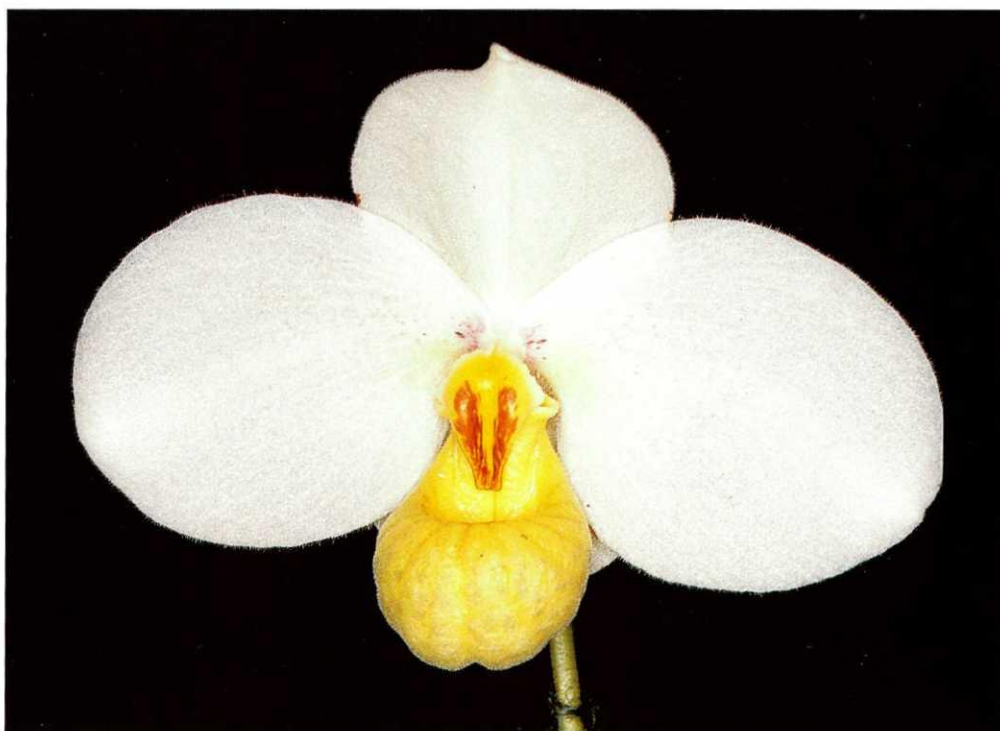


Fig. 20. Close-up of flower of *Paphiopedilum emersonii* in cultivation. (Photo.: P. Cribb)