

A Search for Mexican *Pinguicula*s

by

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In August of 1978 we drove to Oaxaca, Mexico in search of *Pinguicula*. We stopped at several places along the way, but found nothing. As soon as we passed Oaxaca and started into the surrounding mountain-side, it didn't take long before we found our first clump of *Pinguicula*s: about 12 plants in full bloom, growing on gravelly red clay, about 50% shaded. See plate 1.

As we drove on, the road took us over a small pass near Ixtlan, and stopped near an old logging camp just beyond the pass. This area was quite cool and damp, and the pine trees were so thick that no direct sun light filtered through to the ground. After a fairly extensive search we found some very nice *Pinguicula*s on the southeastern slope below the road. The flowers were light purple and fairly slender; the leaves were oval-shaped instead of round as were all the other plants we had observed. Further on, just north of Ixtlan, we found about a hundred *Pinguicula*s growing on nearly vertical moss-covered rocks.

One startling thing occurred during our drive through the fog forest. From the car we could see an extremely large flowered *Pinguicula* growing right on the side of the moss-covered trees. See plates 2 and 4. The flowers were the size of a quarter and dark pink in color, with an unusually wide tail. .5 Km's further on we found the same plants growing by the thousands on a vertical incline along the side of the road. These were concentrated in a small area about 30 meters long. See plates 5 and 6.

The fog forest had extremely dense foliage and was constantly wet with fog.

The dead wood on the ground, although it looked firm was completely decayed and gave way to our weight. The trees were so covered with moss that the trunks could not be seen even with close observation.

One very important observation I would like to mention at this time about the Oaxaca mountain area, is the relationship between Bromeliads and *Pinguicula*s. We noticed that when there was a heavy concentration of Bromeliads there were always *Pinguicula*s growing somewhere nearby, which is probably due to a heavier concentration of water in that particular area.

Upon leaving Oaxaca, we drove past Mexico City to Toluca, and from there south towards Ciudad Altamirana. We found some very nice stands of *Pinguicula*s growing only on the west-facing slope alongside the road. The plants were unusual with respect to the wide color range of the flowers. The flowers ranged in color from deep purple to violet, pink and pure white, all growing side by side. I did notice that the shapes of the purple and white flowers were different. The petals on the purple flower are square at the tips and the petals on the white flower are round at the tips. See plate 3.

Although there are reports of *Pinguicula*s growing north of Toluca, we were unable to locate any.

In my opinion it is well worth one's time to spend a month in Mexico, to observe and study the *Pinguicula*s where they grow so abundantly and in such varied form. The *Pinguicula*s are in full bloom by late August continuing through September. (Received May 1, 1979)



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4

Photos by Gordon Blanz



Plate 5



Plate 6

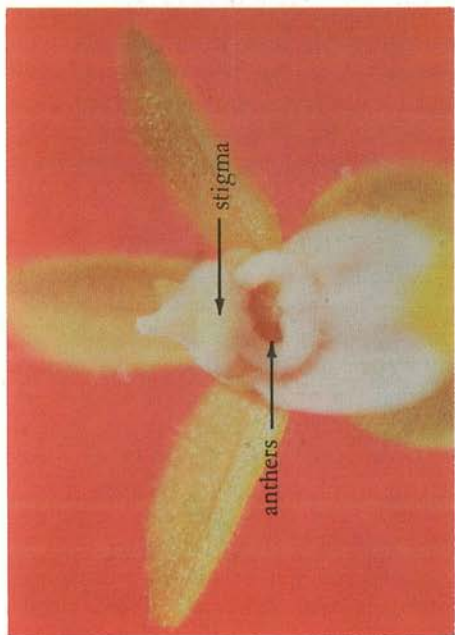


Fig. 1
Corolla removed



Fig. 2
Bill Carroll pollinating
Pinguicula lutea

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