

TWO NEW *PINGUICULA HIRTIFLORA* TEN. (LENTIBULARIACEAE) SITES IN ITALY

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Introduction

Pinguicula hirtiflora Ten. is a rare species of insect eating plant found mainly in the area stretching between Albania and Asia Minor. It favours rock faces dripping with water, and grows at altitudes between 300 and 1300 metres above sea level.

This species has only rarely been sighted in Italy, and has been found growing in isolated sites which are difficult to reach, such as in the Calabria region near Rossano Calabro. To date, sightings have been even rarer in the Campania region and the few examples found on the mountains above Castellammare di Stabia and on the Amalfi coast were reported many years ago (see Front Cover).

During botanical excursions in April 1998 to study its current distribution, we discovered two previously unknown colonies in the Campania region of Italy.

Observations on the First Site

On the 9th of April 1998, we discovered the first new site of *Pinguicula hirtiflora* Ten. in the Avvocatella area, outside the town of Cava dei Tirreni, 202 metres above sea level. The plants were growing in a 10-11 m² area on top of an anthracite grey-coloured rock (most likely volcanic in origin) dripping with water. The rock's consistency was compacted and not friable, and presented a natural dome-shaped conformation protruding above the road.

The population was very large and consisted of approximately 400 plants. They were fairly evenly distributed in an area ranging from one to three meters above the base of the rock face, where they were protected from direct sunlight.

Observations on the Second Site

On the 14th of April 1998 we came across two more populations of *Pinguicula hirtiflora* Ten. in the Badia di Cava area, outside the town of Cava dei Tirreni, 303 m above sea level. The site was a large rocky ridge which was dripping with water in a few parts, and which was not standing in direct sunlight. The plants were growing on top of wet rock whose consistency was compacted and not friable, portions of which had a slightly concave conformation. The two populations were separated by a few meters, and numbered less than 100 individuals in total.

The plants were fairly evenly distributed over the face of the rock wall, at 40-90 centimetres above the ground.

Conclusions

We took samples of *Pinguicula hirtiflora* Ten. to try to acclimatise them to a section of the Botanical Gardens of Naples which offers conditions similar to their natural habitat. Constant observation of these samples has shown that they have adapted very well indeed—the results regarding their introduction and present cultivation methods employed could be deemed excellent. There is no doubt that this success is also due to the particularly favourable microclimate in which they have been grown.

The authors intend to perform chromosomic and floristic studies as well as examinations of the distribution of *Pinguicula hirtiflora* Ten. for the Garden's herbarium, which is part of the Department of Vegetable Biology of the University of Naples. As part of a joint collaboration with foreign experts, surveys will be carried out in Campania and other known sites where this rare and most interesting insect-eating plant grows, with a view to producing a detailed up-to-date map of the existing populations.

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