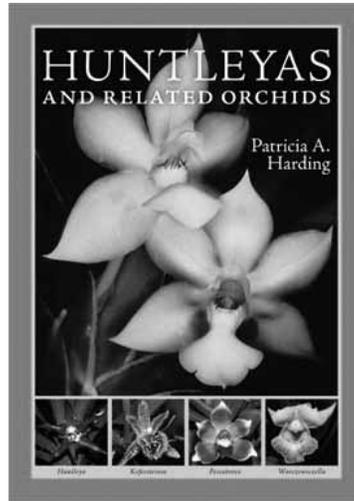


## BOOK REVIEWS

Patricia A. Harding, 2008. **Huntleyas and Related Orchids**. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. 260 pp, 6 line drawings, 150 colour photographs, hardback.



*Huntleyas and Related Orchids* is a useful book. Notwithstanding their intrinsic beauty and their horticultural significance, orchid species allied to the genus *Huntleya* (including the quite difficult *Chondrorhyncha* complex) are often mislabelled and misidentified at the generic and specific ranks, both in living collections and herbaria. The reasons for such confusion are not peculiar to this group of plants, but relate to the way similar pollinator behaviours drive floral morphology in the Orchidaceae, resulting in similar pollination syndromes and flower shapes that cross the borders between different evolutionary lines.

This book helps readers to understand the relationships among most of the “derived” genera in subtribe Zygopetalinae. The classification adopted by the author reflects the recent results of molecular analyses, but also tries to clarify, in morphological terms, the distinctiveness of the groups revealed by the comparison of genome sequences.

An introductory chapter discusses the circumscription of the *Huntleya* clade (i.e. all the relatives that, like *Huntleya*, are descendants of the same ancestor with which they share derived character states), explaining the reasons for excluding from the

treatment the basal genera of the group, *Cryptarrhena* and *Dichaea*. Then a deeper look is given to the generic limits of the *Huntleya* relatives, with the aid of a cladogram generated from molecular data, and to a discussion of the characteristics of the group. Two useful keys to the genera, the first using vegetative characters and the second floral features, precede the chapter on cultivation.

The core of the book, which covers more than 160 pages (plus photographs), is devoted to individual treatments of the 18 genera and about 200 included species, arranged alphabetically (with some exceptions) from *Aetheorhyncha* to *Warczewiczella*. Each chapter presents a brief history of the genus, etymology, a list of the species and a dichotomous key to their identification. Species treatments include synonyms, description, measurements, etymology, distribution and habit, phenology, and comments.

The photographs are mainly good, and those of *Chondrorhyncha manzurii*, *C. velastiguii*, *Echynorhyncha ecuadorensis*, *E. vollesii*, *Hoehnella gehrtiana*, *Ixyophora fosterae*, *I. luerorum*, *Kefersteinia aurorae*, *K. escalarensis*, *K. expansa*, *K. forcipata*, *K. hirtzii*, *Stenia aurorae*, *S. jarae*, *S.*

*pastorellii* and *S. pustulosa* are probably the first ever to be published. Plate 11 depicts, in my opinion, *Chaubardiella subquadrata*, while Plate 16, captioned *Chaubardiella subquadrata*, is a perhaps undescribed species — the type of *Kefersteinia subquadrata*, basionym for *C. subquadrata*, is from Costa Rica, where no flowers like that in Plate 16 ever appeared. Plate 87, labelled *K. orbicularis*, is probably of a different taxon. Plate 134 shows *Stenia dodsoniana* (not treated in the text), instead of *S. stenoides*.

Probably the most serious drawback of the treatment is the lack of specimen citations. Even though this may depend on editorial policies, the absence of references to actual specimens and the associated data makes it difficult fully to understand the author's taxonomic concepts, as well as to clearly assess geographic distribution at specific level. Dealing with a reduced number of vouchers (members of some of the treated genera are quite scarce in cultivation), the author admits she resisted the temptation to “lump” species without the basis of enough evidence and “real-life” observations. I think her conservative approach was right, even though as a result the key characters of species in the largest genera (like *Chondroscaphe*, *Kefersteinia* and *Stenia*) are mostly based on features

of the holotypes and the original descriptions, with little if any appreciation of natural variation and geographical patterns.

Specialists will also note the absence of an index of taxonomic novelties, which makes it difficult to search for the new generic rearrangements made by the author in the text. The new combinations are as follows: *Benzingia thienii* (Dodson) P.A.Harding, p. 32; *Ixyophora fosterae* (Dodson) P.A.Harding, p. 94; *Ixyophora luerorum* (R.Vasquez & Dodson) P.A.Harding, p. 94; *Kefersteinia forcipata* (Rchb.f.) P.A.Harding, p. 165; *Pescatoria* (as *Pescatorea*) *xbella* (Rchb.f.) P.A.Harding, p. 212; *Pescatoria xpallens* (Rchb.f.) P.A.Harding, p. 214; *Stenotyla estrellensis* (Ames) P.A.Harding, p. 231, and *Stenotyla helleri* (Fowlie) P.A.Harding, p. 232.

Growers who want to change their plant labels according to the recent phylogenetic systematics of the Zygopetalinae, as well as researchers dealing with the complex diversity of the *Huntleya* alliance in the Neotropics, will find this book a fine and valuable tool, which brings order to a fascinating but still unappreciated group of plants.

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