

Species of the Month

January 2005



Maxillaria tenuifolia

Coconut Cream Pie Orchid

Easy growing epiphytic *Maxillaria tenuifolia* can be found growing in Mexico and throughout Central America at elevations from near sea level to 3300 feet. This somewhat climbing sympodial epiphyte has ovoid compressed pseudobulbs that can be up to 2 1/2 inches long that produce growths that carry a single 5 to 20 inch leaf with overlapping sheaths at the base. The thin grass-like leaf tapers to a sharp point at the tip. The 2 inch inflorescence emerges from the base of the bulb to produce one heavily textured, highly fragrant dark red flower mottled with yellow. It is commonly known as the coconut orchid because the scent strongly resembles the smell of fresh coconut. The name *Maxillaria* is derived from the Latin word for "jawbone," because the flower column resembles little insect jaws. These plants bloom mostly in spring, but can bloom at almost any time of year.

LIGHT

1500-2000 foot-candles; intermediate light. Light should be diffused. Never expose the plants to direct sun.

TEMPERATURE

Warm to Intermediate; 55°F min. to 85°F.

WATER

Water thoroughly and heavily while actively growing from late spring through autumn. Plants should be kept moist with only slight drying between waterings while they are actively growing.

HUMIDITY

70% - 80% is preferred.

POTTING

Pots or baskets with a medium that provides excellent drainage and aeration around the roots. Medium fir bark is okay. These plants may also be mounted. Repot when new root growth appears. These plants do not like to be repotted!

FERTILIZER

1/2 to 1/4 strength balanced fertilizer applied weekly while plants are actively growing.