

LAS ORQUÍDEAS DE CHIAPAS

Carlos Rommel, Beutelspacher Baigts, and Iván Moreno Molina. 2018.

Instituto Chinoín, Mexico. Hardcover, 640 pages, 8.7 x 11.4 inches.

\$55.00: orchidconservationalliance.org.

Outside US: nesponda@chinoin.com.

SOMETIMES, once in a decade or so, a brilliant orchid book is published and then... completely forgotten. *Las Orquídeas de Chiapas* is such a book. It was published four years ago in Mexico and written in Spanish; it was not promoted outside its native country.

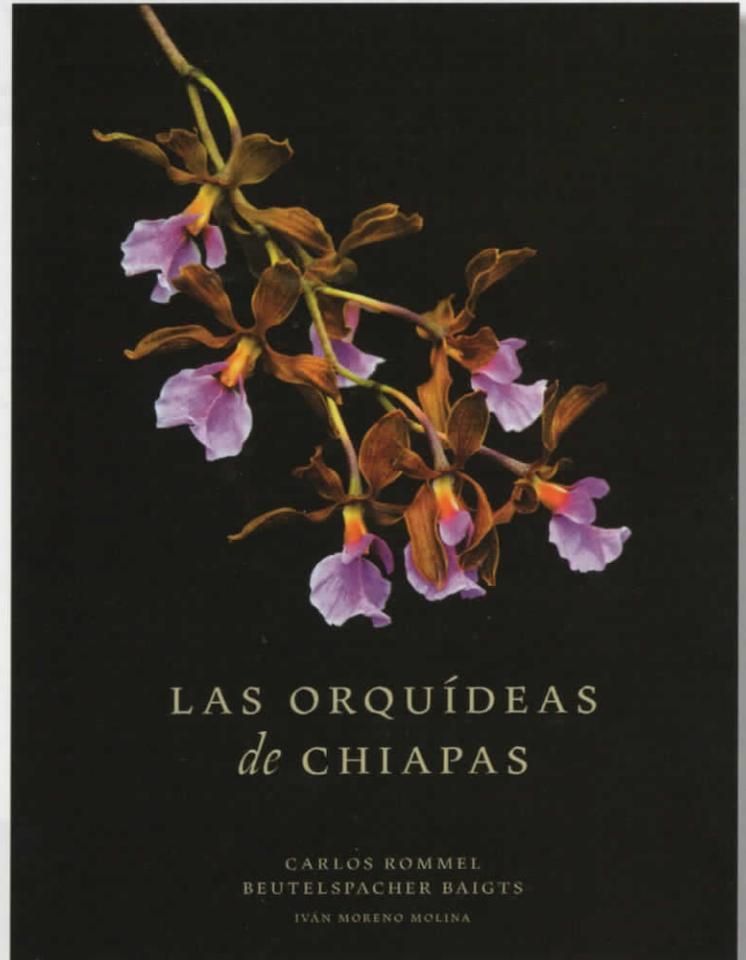
But what a book it is! It is a monograph on the most southern and most orchid-rich state of Mexico, Chiapas. Many people love and grow Mexican orchids. Well, 60% of these orchids originate from Chiapas! That is 723 species— which are all in this book! Both authors were born in Chiapas and still live and work there. The first author, Carlos Beutelspacher, did research for 33 years and published over 170 scientific articles, plus twenty books or book chapters. Also, the scientific career of the second (and younger) author, Iván Moreno Molina, is well underway.

Now, let's zoom in on the book itself. The first 54 pages offer a well-written and well-illustrated introduction to the region and its orchids. What climates—yes, plural, it's a mountainous region with the highest point of 4,093 meters (13,429 feet)? What soil types? What types of vegetation? Also, the history of orchid research in Chiapas is recorded, and the ecological, cultural, and economic importance of orchids.

The following 540 pages describe all the 723 species in 151 genera the authors found in Chiapas. Each genus gets a solid introduction, then the species of that genus are described in the same way: etymology of the name, description of plant and flower, distribution (general and in Chiapas), habitat and altitude, flowering time, flower fragrance (not many books mention fragrance!). Good photos, often two or three or more, are mainly taken in situ.

The genera are organized by subfamily, tribe, and subtribe so that related genera are grouped together. This makes a good index indispensable, and the book has one. This index indicates 85 endemic Mexican species, with 30 species in Chiapas. The book includes a glossary, a list of literature of almost seven pages, and a list of synonyms.

What more could you wish? Okay, recommendations on how to *grow* the orchids, perhaps, but that is outside the scope of the book. However, the information on climate, habitat, and altitude will be enough information to translate into culture information.



Before we end this review, a practical tip: in 2013, the first author published a much smaller book, *Guía de Orquídeas de Chiapas*. That guide presents “only” 250 of the most common species, so don't mix up the two books!

In conclusion: this book sets a higher standard for regional monographs on orchids. Even if your understanding of Spanish is basic, you'll love this book!✿

—Gab van Winkel