

355 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass
December 3, 1923.

My dear Lankester:

Your letter dated on the 3d. and 15th, November, and your postcard of the 18th, arrived this forenoon, adding cheer to a clear December day. It is delightful to receive letters when the conditions under which they are read, stimulate enthusiasm and good fellowship.

You ask several questions which I might as well answer at once. Your 461 is *Pleurothallis ruscifolia* R. Br. Change this to 461a. Then 461 will be clear for *Epidendrum vagans* of Sched. Orch. 6(1923)76. You made use of this number twice. No doubt about that, because I am a queer old dog, and I preserve the data-slips that you take so much pains to write out for me. Although I copy the sum and substance of them on the regular labels, I must keep them because they represent a human touch that gratifies me. In my letter dated November 16th, I gave you the name of your 506 as *Eriopsis Wercklei* Schltr. Your 483 is an orchid, after all. But the flowers are immature. It would seem to be a close ally of *Lankesterella*. I hope you will find this again in a more advanced condition of growth.

Additional bottles went to you over a week ago. But please supplement the flowers in alcohol with dried specimens. The herbarium, after all, is permanent and its records are sacred, while the specimens sent in alcohol sometimes perish through neglect or get lost. I wish you could dry specimens without too much trouble. It seems a pity to iron them. If you find a hot place in which to deposit your press, the specimens dry pretty well if you change the driers a few times. At this stage of the undertaking, quantity rather than quality is important.

Mrs. Ames is making a drawing of Pleurothallis Lankesteri Rolfe, for Sched. Orch. 7. We have about 39 drawings of Pleurothallis ready for publication, most of them Costa Rican species that you have contributed to the herbarium. I have been holding off on the printing of this series, as I have some new species ~~to~~ propose and I want to see what Schlechter has done in that often promised, long delayed magnum opus of his, before I commit myself to print. It is really a shame that two of us should be working up the same group for the same country at the same time. I have about concluded, however, to push forward and run the risk of being beaten to press.

You refer in your last letter to means of longer exploratory trips. Surely nothing would please me more than to stimulate such trips by means of substantial contributions. Let us have something to say about this. Suggestions will be welcome and will find a warm reception here. I am really fascinated by your Costa Rican orchid flora. I want to make a thorough study of ^{it} them. If you can ~~tell~~ ^{help} me "more fully", and really want to bring joy to an enthusiastic student of the Orchidaceae, then the farther afield you go, the greater the chances for novelties. Perhaps we can add a few more gems to the realm of Lankesterianae Orchidaceae.

I am rather surprised to find that Panama and Costa Rica although simply geographical names have so far yielded entirely different species. Of course, there are wide ranging species (these I take it you avoid), but aside from these, the orchids of Cartago and the "hills east of Panama" are entirely different. This is interesting and very significant.

Mr. Chittenden has promised to help Standley in every way possible toward a good haul of orchids. When Standley arrives, I hope you will smother him with specimens, allowing him just

enough breath to do his work well. I am counting heavily on the results of this coming winter.

Just at present I am pushing ahead with an enumeration of the orchids of Central and North America on much the same lines that I followed in my work for Merrill's Enumeration of Philippine Plants. I am simply overwhelmed with surprise at the indications. Just for a list with bibliography and geographical data, I am afraid ~~one~~ thousand pages will be insufficient. Is it not wonderful how the laws that govern our destinies, deter us from attempting similar tasks? I suppose the dear neighbors have little or no conception of the pleasures that a poor fool such as I appear to them to be experiences in the tranquility of the stuffy herbarium where dried plants are counted as so many precious possessions. And then, when the game is over, and the toys are tucked away, the heads that shake when so much wasted time is contemplated, are on the shoulders of other fools.

I think I have finished with everything you have sent in. If I have failed to report on any of your numbers, send me a list of them and I will report. Sometimes I file specimens away before I enter their names on your record-slip. The new things you are able to follow in that little journal which has done so much to identify you with the flora of Costa Rica.

Please send to me more explicit data about that camera for which you desire plate holders(?).

The evening has simply gone.

Yours faithfully,

Robert L. ...



Ames, Oakes. 1923. "Ames, Oakes Dec. 3, 1923 [to C.H. Lankester]." *Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files*

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