

A NEW PEPEROMIA FROM NICARAGUA

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It was in 1961 that Dr. Louis O. Williams began a program of active field work in Central America, complementing his work on the Flora of Guatemala project. Together with Antonio Molina of the Escuela Agricola Panamericana, Honduras, and their associates, a number of collecting trips were made into the Cordillera Central of Nicaragua, an area little collected before. Among the many interesting plants that were collected in these moist evergreen forests was a delicate little peperomia (Piperaceae) quite unlike other small-leaved species known from southern Central America. It is described here and named after the province in which most of its collections have originated.

PEPEROMIA MATAGALPENSIS W. Burger, sp. nov.

Herbae procumbentes vel erectae, usque ad 20 cm altae, caules plerumque cum radicibus adventis. Foliae verticillatae (4, 5, 6, 7), petiolis 1-2 mm longis, laminis 4-8 mm longis et 1.5-3 mm latis, anguste obovatis, glabris. Inflorescentiae terminales solitariae, spicae 4-7 mm longae super pedunculis 4-8 mm longis, bractae 0.3-0.4 mm latae. Fructus circa 0.6 mm longi, anguste ovoidei sessilibus, stigmate terminali.

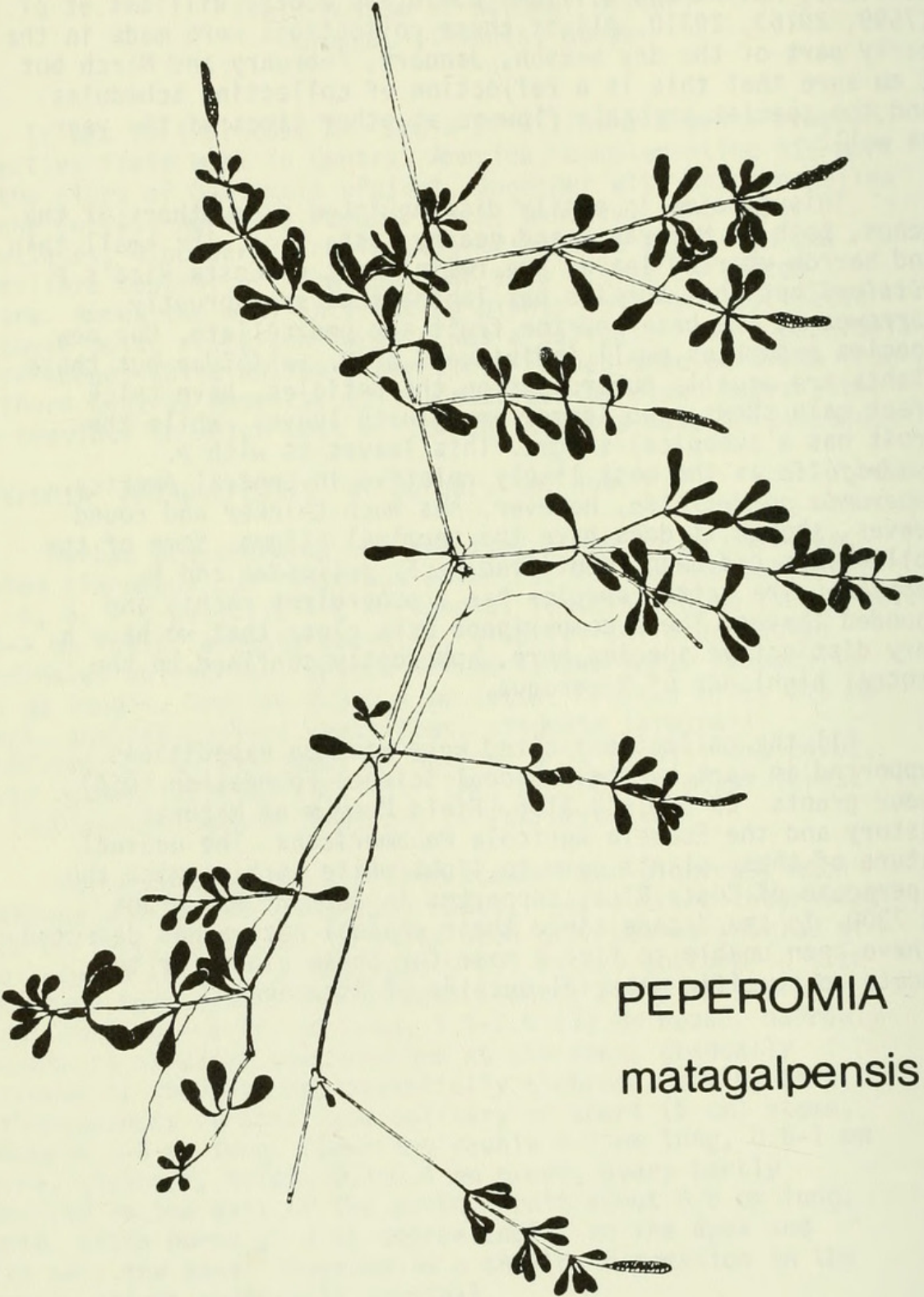
HOLOTYPE: L. O. Williams, A. Molina, & T. P. Williams 24762, Field Museum 1729289; ISOTYPE: EAP, BM, MO. In mossy forest at 1800 meters, above Jinotega, 20 February 1963.

Herbaceous epiphytes, thin stemmed and glabrous, much branched and rooting from many nodes, leaf-bearing internodes 3-20 mm long, about 0.5 mm thick when dry. Leaves whorled at the node, 4 to 7 per node (rarely 2), rather uniform in size and shape both within and between plants, petioles 1-2 mm long; laminae 4-6 (8) mm long, 1.5-2.5 (3) mm broad, narrowly obovate to oblanceolate, rounded at the apex, gradually narrowed at the petiole, essentially glabrous, drying thin. Inflorescences terminal and solitary on short (5 cm) stems, peduncle 5-8 mm long, flowering rachis 4-7 mm long, 0.5-1 mm thick, glabrous, bracts 0.3-0.4 mm broad, ovary partly immersed in the axis of the spike. Fruit about 0.6 mm long, ovoid, often borne at a 45 degree angle to the apex and with only the base imbedded in a shallow depression in the rachis, stigma apparently terminal.

Peperomia matagalpensis is a plant of cloud forests and mossy forests in Nicaragua's central highlands. It has been collected in the departments of Madriz, Matagalpa, and Jinotega at elevations from 1300 to 1800 meters. Collections seen in addition to the type are: A. Molina 20262, 20353 and 20381; Williams, Molina and Williams 23376 and 23628; Williams et al. 27599, 29163, 29210. All of these collections were made in the early part of the dry season, January, February and March but I am sure that this is a reflection of collecting schedules and the species probably flowers at other times of the year as well.

This species is easily distinguished from others of the genus, both in Nicaragua and nearby Costa Rica. Its small thin and narrow whorled leaves are reminiscent of Costa Rica's *P. pittieri* but that species has lamina that are abruptly narrowed at the base and the fruit are pedicellate. Our new species resembles small individuals of *P. galioides* but those plants are usually puberulent on the petioles, have thick erect main stems, and larger emarginate leaves, while the fruit has a subapical stigma. This leaves us with *P. quadrifolia* as the most likely relative in Central America. *Peperomia quadrifolia*, however, has much thicker and round leaves, though it does have the terminal stigma. Some of the collections had been identified as *P. galioides* and *P. deppeana*. The latter species has a puberulent rachis and rounded leaves. These comparisons make clear that we have a very distinctive species here, apparently confined to the central highlands of Nicaragua.

All the collections cited were made on expeditions supported in part by the National Science Foundation (USA) under grants GB 698, GB 3106, Field Museum of Natural History and the Escuela Agrícola Panamericana. The unusual nature of these plants came to light while working with the Piperaceae of Costa Rica, supported in part by NSF grant GB 7300. In the decade since their unusual nature was detected I have been unable to find a name for these plants or to locate conspecific material outside of Nicaragua



PEPEROMIA
matagalpensis



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