



New, Rare and Beautiful Heliconias from Central America and Peru

By Raymond Jerome, HSPR Member

This is the third of four articles based on new, rare, and beautiful heliconias. In the September, 2014 volume of the newsletter, I presented new and rare heliconias from Colombia and Ecuador. In this issue, I will present new and rare heliconias from Central America and Peru.

We owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to Carla Black and Bruce Dunston for their reported findings and photographs from their explorations into the jungles of Panama and Costa Rica.

Many of the photos from Peru were photographed by Sergio Tejedor and my wife, Migdalia, and I on our heliconia expedition into the Amazon Jungles of northern Peru. On this trip we found the very rare species of heliconias, *H. tenebrosa* and *H. timothei*. We also believe that we discovered a new species (or at least a new hybrid), which we named 'Devon Graham', in honor of our expedition leader who discovered this plant. It's difficult to "top" the excitement of finding a new or rare heliconia while on a trip to an exotic locale.

It is sometimes difficult to tell plants apart that appear to be very

similar. Some heliconias that may look alike, in actuality, may be different species. Such was the case with the *H. irassa* that we saw in Panama and a very similar appearing heliconia that we found in Peru. We thought that they were the same species, but they turned out to be different species.

Heliconias from Central America

Most Central American *H. lankesteri* are either totally red or totally yellow. However, Bruce Dunston found this strange mutation whose bracts were basically yellow with bright red splotches on all of its bracts.



A mottled form of *H. lankesteri*.

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Dates to Remember

- HSPR Meeting, 10:00 am, Sunday, September 13, 2015. Caguas Botanical Garden, Caguas, PR.

New, Rare and Beautiful Heliconias from Central America and Peru (continued)



Typical yellow and red forms of *Heliconia lankesteri*.

The species *H. colgantea* has a beautiful pink inflorescence with a cream colored first bract. The similar shaped inflorescence of species *H. trichocarpa*



Heliconia colgantea.

is all red with a greenish-cream colored first bract. Because these two species have very similar shaped inflorescences, and come from the same locale, they are often confused. Natives of Panama often call *H. colgantea* “pink trichocarpa.”

The beautiful red and yellow *H. irrasa* is from Central America. It is also seen in completely red and completely yellow forms. We found an



Red and yellow *H. spathocircinata*.

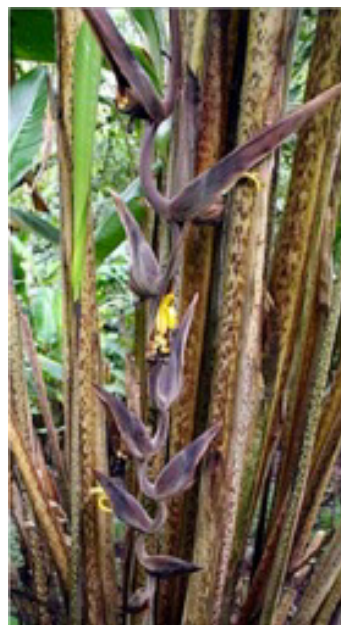
almost identical appearing heliconia as the red/yellow variety on our trip to the Northern Peruvian Amazon jungles and thought that we were collecting *H. irrasa*. However, it turns out that the one we found in Peru was a completely different species, *H. spathocircinata* (red/yellow form), which never occurs in Central America, but is widely spread throughout South America. Widely separated locations may produce very similar appearing heliconias.

The beautiful species *H. bella* was temporarily thought to be extinct, until Carla Black found an isolated clump growing in Panama. She was able to take a few rhizomes to



Heliconia bella.

her farm in Panama where it is now flourishing.



All “black” form of *Heliconia necrobracteata*.

This specimen of *H. necrobracteata* is all black in coloration. Normally the inflorescences of this heliconia have red bracts with black tips. However, Carla Black found this all black specimen in the forest of Panama and was able to get it growing well on her farm as a specimen with all black inflorescences. Because of similar coloration, it has been confused with *H. sclerotracha* from Colombia and Ecuador.

New, Rare and Beautiful Heliconias from Central America and Peru (continued)

Heliconia sp. 'Rojona' is believed to be a new species found by the owner of the Panamanian



The beautiful *Heliconia* sp. 'Rojona'.

“Dracula Orchid Farm.” He said that he found this heliconia growing alone in the Panamanian jungle and brought it back to his farm. He called his cultivar ‘Rojona.’ John Kress thinks that this plant may be a mutation of *H. atropurpurea*.

Heliconias from Peru

Heliconia juruana very closely resembles *H. rostrata*. However the bracts of *H. juruana* are much longer, more tubular in shape, and more widely spaced along the rachis, than are those of *H. rostrata*. *Heliconia juruana* is a very common heliconia occurring along the Napo River branch of the Amazon River in the northern Amazonian jungles of Peru.



Heliconia juruana.



Heliconia rostrata 'Pink Peru'.

The *H. rostrata* cultivar ‘Pink Peru’ is a very rare heliconia in the wild. The only known specimen was one plant that Mark Collins (during one of his early heliconia collecting expeditions to Peru) saw growing in a lady’s private flower garden. She was kind enough

to share her rhizomes with him, which he propagated back in Hawaii. It was only because of this fortunate incident that we have ‘Pink Peru’ available in our collections. ‘Pink Peru’ is probably the most beautiful of all of the forms of *H. rostrata*.

We first saw the *H. rostrata* cultivar called ‘Green Tipped Red’ at the Heliconia Society International conference in Iquitos, Peru. There were several of these inflorescences used in the beautiful bouquets of Margarita Ríos Chiong.



Heliconia rostrata ‘Green Tipped Red’.

New, Rare and Beautiful Heliconias from Central America and Peru (continued)

Margarita grows heliconias on her farm in Iquitos for the cut flower market of that region. She had several clumps of this small rostrata growing on her farm. It is very similar to 'Pink Peru' except that its rachis and basilar bracts are red, rather than being the vivid pink of 'Pink Peru.'

The beautiful yellow *H. rostrata* has two color forms. One of these forms has a yellow rachis. The other one has a pink rachis. This rostrata was also first seen on Margarita's farm in Iquitos.



Two beautiful forms of yellow *Heliconia rostrata*, one with a yellow rachis (left) and one with a pink rachis (right).

The *H. rostrata* cultivar called 'Pinky' is a very rare rostrata. This rostrata probably has disappeared from cultivation. This photo was taken of the only plant of this species that I have ever seen or seen photographed. I photographed this picture many years ago on the



Heliconia rostrata 'Pinky'.

farm of Endre Guttman in Puerto Rico. He said that the friend, who gave it to him, called it 'Pinky'. However the friend did not remember from where he had gotten it. It was a very small plant with only this one inflorescence, which I photographed. Shortly after that, Endre told me that the entire plant had died.



Heliconia rostrata 'Spiral'.

The strange spiral version of *H. rostrata* is from the farm of Chris Di-erberger in Brazil. He calls it 'Spiral.'

Roger Peckenpaugh of Hawaii obtained this hybrid of *H. rostrata* x *H. spathocircinata* while collecting heliconias in Peru. Its proposed cultivar name is 'Peckenpaughii.'



Heliconia rostrata x *spathocircinata* 'Peckenpaughii'.

Heliconia plowmaniana closely resembles *H. rostrata* in form and color. However, it is a separate species.

New, Rare and Beautiful Heliconias from Central America and Peru (continued)



Heliconia plowmaniana.

The immature inflorescence of *H. tenebrosa* is totally green and white. The mature inflorescence has a burgundy basal bract and rachis coloration, greenish-white cheeks, and purplish-green lips—totally different from the immature form.



Heliconia penduloides 'Perfect Darling'.

This juvenile inflorescence of what may be a new species was discovered on one of our Amazon expedition into the Northern Peruvian Amazon jungles. It was found in the "highlands," up from the Napo River, in a densely forested jungle growth. It was surrounded by large clumps of *H. standleyii*, but its single clump stood alone. Our expedition leader, Dr Devon Graham,



Heliconia robusta.

Heliconia penduloides has a form with a yellow rachis and pink bracts, which has the cultivar name 'Perfect Darling'. Another color variation of *H. penduloides* has all peach coloration. This species is found in the same general area of Peru as *H. robusta*, which is a new one for most of us.



Young (left) and mature (right) inflorescences of *Heliconia tenebrosa*.

discovered this specimen. We named it in honor of him -- calling it 'Devon Graham.' However, it's possible that this heliconia may be a hybrid of *H. standleyii* and *H. marginata*.

Heliconia timothei was also discovered on one of our Amazon expeditions into the northern Peruvian Amazon jungles. It



Heliconia sp. 'Devon Graham'.



Heliconia timothei.

was found in the "highlands," up from the Napo River, in semi-open fields. Its foliage grows completely different from that of *H. psittacorum*. Instead of its leaves growing from a stem, like *H. psittacorum*, its leaves all grow from the base of the plant. The plant only grows about three feet tall. The inflorescence is a beautiful mix of yellow, orange, and red.

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*Promoting Zingiberales in
Puerto Rico since 1996.*



The Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico, Inc. was founded in 1996. The objectives of the society are to stimulate and promote the enjoyment and understanding of Heliconia and related plants of the order Zingiberales through education, research and communication, and to interact with the Heliconia Society International and other institutions which share similar interests, purposes or objectives.

From Our Last Meeting

President Roberto Castro welcomed everybody to our beautiful farm in Adjuntas. Treasurer Reily Rodríguez gave his report and informed a balance of \$8,644.82. An open and lively discussion was held regarding how the extended lack of rain has affected heliconia collections around the island. Some members reported the loss of entire stocks.

Roberto Castro offered a guided tour of Finca Siberia's heliconia collection and the surrounding areas bordering the Guilarte Forest.

After the tour a delicious lunch was served... "Arroz con pollo y habichuelas guisadas" prepared by our friend Permu, from Adjuntas. We then had our traditional raffle with a large number of plants/rhizomes available. Special thanks to Rosa Velez for her collaboration with the raffle.

It was a beautiful day!

Gildreth González
HSPR Secretary

President's Corner

The June 2015 meeting was held at our farm "Siberia" in Barrio Guilarte in Adjuntas. It was a real honor to share our heliconia collection with a large number of the society's members. Everybody enjoyed the cool temperature, clear skies and a delicious lunch.

Our September meeting will be held at the Jardín Botánico de Caguas, thanks to Edgardo Valera's suggestion and coordination. As always we will start at 10:30 am on Sunday September 13. Raymond Jerome will offer a photographic presentation on beautiful flowers. A few members suggested either buying or asking for donations of unique/rare heliconias for the raffle. It would be an incentive for people to buy tickets. This suggestion will be presented at our next meeting. Also, since the Society's finances are in good standing, we suggest that before the traditional raffle everybody donate one special or unique plant to the Jardín Botánico.

Please remember, we have elections in December to elect the new board of directors. We have time to think about the possible candidates and fathom their willingness to accept their nomination. It is always healthy to bring new people with new ideas and perspectives.

As always we encourage members to bring rhizomes or plants for the raffle, as well as refreshments or snacks.

See you in Caguas!

Roberto L. Castro
President, HSPR