



### PROSTHECHEA cochleata

Prosthechea cochleata is one of the longest blooming orchids you can grow. A mature plant will begin its bloom cycle in late March or early April and will bloom sequentially off each inflorescence until late fall. It will bear 6 to 8 flowers on each inflorescence and will continue to produce blooms as the old flowers die off. A mature plant can produce well over 100 blooms in a single season. Pick the dying blooms off but do not cut the inflorescence until it has finished blooming in late fall. I let the inflorescence dry to brown before cutting it when I begin repotting in late winter.

The flower is unresupinated, meaning the lip is at the top as the flower did not rotate downward. Petals and sepals are long and graceful, ice green to yellow in color. The lip is purple, striped with black. Flowers are 7cm wide and 11cm long (approximately 3x4”).

Prosthechea cochleata is native to south Florida throughout Central America. It is the national flower of Belize.

During its history it has been a nomad. First known as Epidendrum cochleatum, it was later transferred and became known as Encyclia cochleata. Finally, it was transferred to the genus Prosthechea in 1996 by Wes Higgins, then of the Marie Selby Orchid Identification Center. It is still referred to by many growers as an Encyclia.

It is an intermediate to warm grower and needs bright light. Water and fertilize regularly during the growing season, but let it dry out between waterings. It requires far less water when in its semi-dormancy in late fall and winter. Water just enough to keep the pseudobulbs from shriveling. Most growers grow it in a clay pot with a normal coarse epiphyte media of bark or bark and sponge rock.

I grow mine quite successfully in bright light in my pool cage. The screen is extra fine and brown in color. It provides about 30% shade. Shade cloth or hanging it under a fairly open tree should work fine as well. Do not overpot, it likes to be crowded. When repotting, I just drop it in a larger pot and let it grow to specimen size, 20 or 25 pseudobulbs. I shake off the old mix and provide new mix around the outer edges.

Remember, it is an epiphyte (air plant) and does not need media to thrive. We pot them and add mix to hold them straight up for our convenience, not because the plant requires this treatment. This is an easy plant to grow, ideal for beginning orchidists but spectacular enough in appearance to appeal to growers of any level.

These orchids are among my favorites, but if you have one you would like included, please contact me at [kruegerr2901@gmail.com](mailto:kruegerr2901@gmail.com).