

# Lost Aroids: On the taxonomic importance of relocating poorly collected species

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## ABSTRACT

*Aridarum montanum* Ridl. and *Piptospatha insignis* N.E.Br. (Araceae: Schismatoglottideae), aroids originating from Borneo that are each known from a single collection, are discussed and illustrated. The history of their discovery is reviewed, together with what is known or speculated of their ecology. The biological significance of the collection locality of *A. montanum* is highlighted. The species' individual importance to modern systematics is highlighted.

## KEY WORDS

Araceae, *Aridarum*, *Piptospatha*, Borneo, Malaysia, Sarawak, Santubong.

## INTRODUCTION

'Lost' plant species – species tantalizingly only known from a single herbarium collection, or frustratingly from just an old illustration, hold an abiding fascination for plant enthusiasts, whether professional botanists or keen hobbyists. The ranks of these 'still lost' plant species are perhaps no better exemplified than by *Archivea kewensis* Christenson & Jenny (Fig. 1), a Brazilian species (indeed, a genus) known from a single 19<sup>th</sup> century watercolour deposited in the Herbarium & Archives of Kew Gardens, from whence the genus and species epithets are derived (Christenson & Jenny, 1996).

Aroids, perhaps by reason of their often originating from almost inaccessible tropical forests, are host to a remarkable number of such 'lost' species. Remarkable, too, is that quite some number of long-lost species has been re-found over the past 20 years. Of particular note [with the period "lost" in years] are: *Gearum brasiliense* N.E.Br. [150 years] (Mayo et al., 1994), *Mangonia tweediana* Schott [142 years] (Bogner & Marchesi, 2000), *Zomicarpella maculata* N.E.Br. [116 years] (Bogner, 2007, 2009), and *Ulearum sagittatum* Engl. [90 years] (Boyce, 1995; Bogner, 1997).

However, many aroid species remain elusive. Two of these, from Borneo, are the subject of this short piece.

## *Aridarum montanum* Ridl. – Figs. 2 and 3

In 1909 Cecil Joslin Brooks, a metallurgical chemist and competent amateur botanist in the employ of the gold-mining division of the Borneo Co. Ltd in Sarawak, collected a diminutive aroid at an unspecified locality on Gunung (Mt) Santubong, a large sandstone mountain situated on a peninsula jutting into the South China Sea approximately 35 km north of Kuching, the state capital of Sarawak. Brooks' solitary pressed specimen was subsequently sent to the British Museum (now the Natural History Museum, London), where it was worked up by Henry Nicholas Ridley, with