



Wanted Plant Species Spring 2007 *Piperia leptopetala*

Synonym: *Platanthera leptopetala*

Common Name: Narrow-Petal Rein Orchid

Plant Family: Orchidaceae

General Distribution: Northern Baja California to southern Oregon.

County Distribution: Growing in and among clearings in chaparral, and often found on north and northeast slopes, and some west-facing canyons in shade. Collections have been made on Cuyamaca, Viejas, and Otay mountains. More recent collections have been made on Viejas Mountain; however, the historic Echo Dell, Otay Mountain, and Baja California populations have not been seen for many decades.

Plant Description: *Piperia* are members of the Orchidaceae. They have tubers that remain dormant under ground in the summer and early fall. Leaves emerge during the rainy season (November to April) with flowering occurring in late May through June, after the elliptic-shaped leaves have faded. The inflorescence is a spike and can be very short (10 to 15 cm), or up to 30 cm tall in good rainfall years. The flowers are small and green, usually 5 mm wide, with a lip that is very narrow compared to *Piperia cooperi*. *Piperia leptopetala* has a corolla shape very similar to *Piperia elongata*; however, the nectary spur is short, 2-6 mm long, and is similar to that of *P. cooperi*.

Comments: I am currently doing a study of this genus. If you find *Piperia leptopetala*, I would like the GPS coordinates and a general description of where the plant has been found growing. If you have permission by the landowner to collect plants, please collect a leaf or 2 or more flower bract samples for DNA extraction, and a few flowers in a preservative. I will have drying crystals to store the leaves, and bottles of preservative are available at the San Diego Natural History Museum Botany Department for anyone who needs them for the *Piperia* specimens. Good photographs of the plants and flowers in the field are always welcome. Locations of any *Piperia* populations in San Diego County, and the rest of California would be most appreciated. We are also interested in revising the conservation status of *Piperia cooperi* with CNPS and CDFG, so if you know of any populations or have questions about these orchids, then please feel free to contact me at Robert.Lauri@cgu.edu.



Piperia leptopetala (Cuyamaca Rancho State Park)



Piperia leptopetala (Viejas Mountain)



Piperia leptopetala flower (Viejas Mountain)



Piperia cooperi flower (Viejas Mountain)



Piperia leaves



Piperia elongata (Palomar Mtn.)

By Robert Lauri

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