

New blueberry species found in the Colombian forests

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The gorgeous new *Psammisia sophiae* from Colombia. Credit: Paola Pedraza-Peñalosa.

The description of five new species of blueberry relatives from Colombia highlights the country's great diversity of the plant family *Ericaceae* and the importance of field exploration. These new mortiños, as locally known, are added to the hundreds of blueberry relatives that are native to Colombia. The new additions are endemic species that exhibit morphological characters unparalleled within the genera in which they are classified. The study was published in the open access journal *PhytoKeys*.

Colombia is one of the most biodiverse countries of the world and it is the richest in species of the blueberry family (*Ericaceae*) in the New World tropics.

Through field work in remote areas of Colombia that have never been botanically explored before, researcher Paola Pedraza-Peñalosa, from The New York Botanical Garden, discovered several new non-tree species that are related to the North American blueberry.

Some of these [new species](#) are restricted to the Colombian Western Cordillera and Chocó biogeographic region. Despite that most species are found within a protected area, there is concern for the conservation status of some of them as the Colombian Andes and Chocó have alarming rates of deforestation and transformation, sometimes even within areas set aside for conservation, like the one where this rare species were collected.

The fieldwork that led to this discovery, and that of many other [plant](#)

[species](#), is part of a collaboration between The New York Botanical Garden and the Colombian National Herbarium to document of the vascular plants of Las Orquídeas National Park, a protected area strategically located among the humid lowland and montane forests of NW Colombia.



Another beautiful new blueberry relative *Satyria orquidiensis* from Colombia.
Credit: Paola Pedraza-Peñalosa.

More information: Paola Pedraza-Peñalosa P (2015) New blueberry and mortiño relatives (Ericaceae) from north western Colombia.

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