

## SERAPIAS

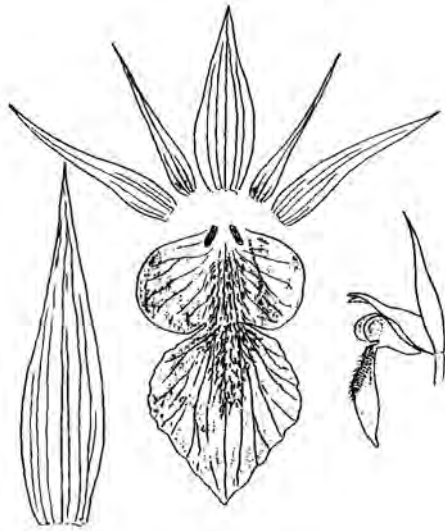
This genus has an extensive range from the Azores and Portugal in the west, to the Caucasus in the east, from N Africa in the south, to N France, Austria and Switzerland. Essentially it is a Mediterranean genus, with six species recognised in *Flora Europaea*. Some authorities split these into nearly twenty species, a situation further complicated by ready interspecific hybridisation.

In recent years three species have been found in the British Isles. *S. parviflora* flowered in Cornwall (V.c. 2) in 1989-1991; it has been recorded in France north to Brittany. *S. lingua* was recorded in Guernsey in 1992, and also occurs north to Brittany. *S. cordigera* was recorded in Kent (V.c. 15) in 1996 and flowered again in 1997; it occurs in France north to Finistère. *S. vomeracea* is known from Switzerland but has not yet been recorded in the British Isles, although this is possible since it has a distribution pattern similar to the other species. There is also a 1918 record of *S. neglecta* from a cornfield on the Isle of Wight (*BEC Rep.* 5: 308); this is a localised species of the central Mediterranean and in this case seed may have been accidentally imported with cereal grain. There is no evidence available to date to suggest that *S. cordigera*, *S. lingua* and *S. parviflora* are not native, but their acceptance as such by Rich (1997) should be treated with caution.

For a positive identification to be made, it may be necessary to dissect a flower, so that the key structures can be seen. The shape of the labellum is the best guide to identification, with particular reference to the relative proportions of the hypochile and epichile, the size and shape of the lateral lobes of the hypochile, the presence of hairs on the labellum, and the shape of the callus or calli (small protuberances at the base of the hypochile).

- 1 Epichile broad, as wide or wider than the hypochile; labellum rich reddish-brown, centre of both hypochile and epichile densely hairy; edges of epichile slightly wavy; two divergent calli at base of hypochile; epichile tends to hang vertically  
*S. cordigera* L.
- 1 Epichile narrower than hypochile, as long or longer, narrowed at the junction with the hypochile 2
- 2 Hypochile with a single dark purplish-brown callus at its base; lateral lobes of hypochile rather square in outline, darkly coloured, wider than epichile; epichile slightly longer, pointed, projecting almost horizontally *S. lingua* L.
- 2 Hypochile bearing two parallel calli 3
- 3 Flowers numerous, rather small and hidden by bracts; labellum often reflexed, epichile scarcely longer than hypochile; lateral lobes of hypochile rounded, projecting slightly downwards, not darkly coloured; epichile small, much narrower than hypochile, pointed, may bear a few hairs at base  
*S. parviflora* Parl.
- 3 Flowers large, well spaced, epichile at least twice the length of hypochile; lateral lobes of hypochile projecting well down, forming a sulcus on either side of the epichile, margins dark coloured, often maroon; epichile very long, blade-like (*vomeracea* means 'like a ploughshare'), narrower than hypochile, usually pointing vertically downwards; centre of epichile may be hairy  
*S. vomeracea* (Burm.) Briq.

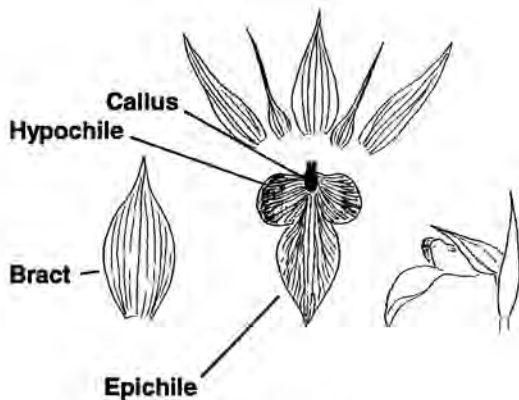
# Plant Crib



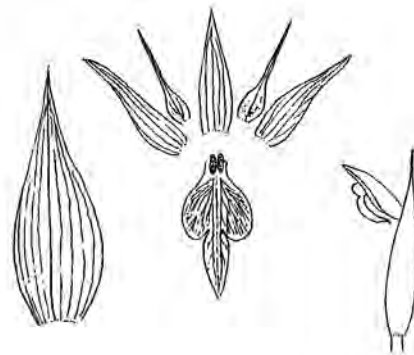
*Serapias cordigera*



*Serapias vomeracea*



*Serapias lingua*



*Serapias parviflora*

Scale of flower parts 1 cm

## Dissected flowers of *Serapias*.

- References** Alibertis, C. & Alibertis, A. (1989). *The Wild Orchids of Crete*. C. & A. Alibertis, Crete.
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**Author** D. C. Lang, November 1997.