Three new succulent peperomias from Perú

Nearly 1700 *Peperomia* species, from herbaceous vines to cushion-forming succulents, can be found in tropical and subtropical climates. And while many are succulent, few make carefree companions to the average succulent collection. They tend to grow either on rocks or as epiphytes with moss covering their roots, frequently next to orchids or bromeliads. Dry hothouse conditions simply don’t suit most of them. There are herbaceous peperomias with thin, broad, papery leaves (many are grown as houseplants), evergreen stem- and leaf-succulents, and even tuberous and caudiciform species, which tend to be deciduous. Their leaves come in almost any shape they can be aromatic (medicinal odors predominate). Many have transparent windows, and beautiful color combinations or spectacular surface patterns, which attract collectors willing to fuss over these tricky tropica.

But even with such a range of forms, peperomias are easy to recognize by their rather peculiar and distinctive inflorescence, which can be showy, despite the fact that the flowers themselves, while numerous, are microscopic and completely lack petals or sepals. They consist instead of single-seeded ovaries flanked by two tiny stamens and protected by a mushroom-shaped bract. The flowers are arranged spirally around a long stalk (on average, 1 mm thick), which can be simple or branched and often takes on decorative colors that contrast nicely with the plant’s leaves or stems. In the past this flowering structure was called either a *spike* or an *amentum* (catkin). But more recently it was established that it should, because of its fleshy nature, more precisely be called a *spadix* (pl. *spadices*), like those observed in the Araceae (the Arum family) and in some palms. Sticky seeds emerge after wind effects pollination and are expressed out of the surface of

**LEFT** *Peperomia dolabriformis* variety *dolabriformis* at the banks of the Huancabamba river, probably where Humboldt saw it for the first time. **MIDDLE** *Peperomia hutchisonii* growing at Chamaya, near Jaén. Note the amazing leaf pattern resembling the surface of the moon. Is this the glaucous variety of *P. dolabriformis* described by Kunth and not since found? **RIGHT** *Peperomia dolabriformis* variety *grandis* is the largest variety of this species. This plant is about 1 m tall.