



In general, a flower has 4 whorls, or rings, of structures. The outermost whorl is comprised of the sepals. Inside or above that will be a whorl of petals. Inside or above that will be the male stamen(s) and in the center will be the female pistil(s). Seeing what is missing or what is extra beyond these 4 whorls, may help us identify the plant or at least the plant family.

Passiflora has an intricate and unusual flower

1. The bud is subtended by leaf-like bracts (a). Each sepal is tipped with a spur-like awn (arrow).



2. Upon opening, the flower has 5 sepals (b), alternating with 5 petals (c). The sepals are tipped with spur-like awns (arrows), the petals are not.



3. These flowers have an extra ring of rod-like structures which is called the corona (d). In this species, each rod is purple at the base, white in the middle and blue at the end. Other species will be colored differently.



4. The gender parts are attached to a central stalk known as the androgynophore (e). The 5 stamens (f) are attached to this stalk, just below the base of the pistil (g). The pistil has three styles/stigmas (h). As the flowers open, the stigmas are held high (left). As the flowers age, the stigmas bend down, close to the anthers and their pollen (right).

