

HIDDEN ORCHID

Maxillaria crassifolia (Lindl.) Rchb.f.

Synonyms: *Heterotaxis crassifolia* Lindl.

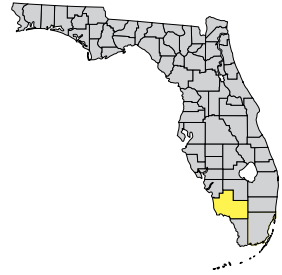
Maxillaria sessilis (Swartz) Fawcett & Rendle

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G4G5/S1

Legal Status: US—none FL—Endangered

Wetland Status: US—OBL FL—OBL



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Orchid growing on tree trunks and high branches, usually hanging downward from thin fibrous **roots** embedded in tree bark. **Stem (pseudobulb)** short, flattened, fleshy, covered by leaf bases. **Leaves** to 12 inches long, leathery, with a prominent, keeled midrib; several leaves per stem. **Flowers** about 0.5 inch long, yellow, waxy with 3 oblong sepals, 2 narrower pointed petals, and a wavy-margined lip; solitary and hidden between bases of leaves. **Fruit** 1 inch long, erect, withered flower attached.

Similar Species: When not in flower, this species may be confused with other epiphytic orchids with fleshy, keeled, strap-like leaves, such as the butterfly orchids (*Encyclia* spp.). Hidden orchid leaves are longer than these species' leaves (except for *Encyclia tampensis* leaves) and are more densely overlapping at the base.

Related Rare Species: Minnie-max orchid (*Maxillaria parviflora*), state-endangered and possibly extirpated from FL, is a trailing plant with long, branched rhizomes and one long, narrow leaf per stem; flowers pale yellow.

Hidden orchid

Maxillaria crassifolia

Habitat: Both hidden orchid and minnie-max orchid attach to trunks and high branches in cypress swamps and sloughs in Collier County.

Best Survey Season: Flowers September–January.

Range-wide Distribution: Both hidden orchid and minnie-max orchid are known from FL, West Indies, and Central and South America.

Conservation Status: Hidden orchid and minnie-max orchid are very rare due to habitat destruction and, especially, plant poaching.

Protection & Management: Enforce plant protection laws and prosecute plant poachers. Protect wetlands from draining and logging.

References: Atwood 1993, Austin 1997, Coile 2000, Hammer 1981, IRC 1999, Luer 1972, McCartney 1993, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

