

GIANT SPIRAL LADIES'-TRESSES

Spiranthes longilabris Lindl.

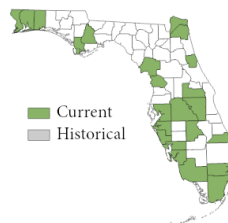
Synonyms: none

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G3/S3

Legal Status: US-none FL-Threatened

Wetland Status: US-FACW+ FL-FACW



Floyd Griffith

Field Description: Perennial herb with a single erect stem to about 10 inches tall. Leaves are basal, linear to narrowly lanceolate, 3-10 cm long. Five or more flowers borne on terminal spikes, only slightly rotating around the stem if at all. Flowers are white with a tinge of yellow, sepals conspicuously spreading horizontally. The whole plant, including flowers, typically lack trichomes but if present will be capitate; this is a distinguishing characteristic. Flowers from late October-December, often with withered leaves.

Similar Species: All of the *Spiranthes* species are similar. Only *S. floridana* and *S. vernalis* also have white flowers with horizontally spreading sepals. *S. floridana* has obovate basal leaves and glabrous flowers that open April-May. *S. vernalis* has a pubescent raceme with non-capitate trichomes on flowers that open in the spring. *S. igniorchis*, described in 2017, is shorter overall, has shorter sepals, blooms August-September, and is only known from Polk County.

giant spiral ladies'-tresses

Spiranthes longilabris

Related Rare Species: *Spiranthes laciniata* and *S. tuberosa* are state-threatened species. *S. adnata*, *S. brevilabris*, *S. costaricensis*, *S. elata*, *S. ovalis*, *S. polyantha*, and *S. torta* are state-endangered species. *S. igniorchis* is a newly described species known only from Polk County.

Habitat: Wet prairies and flatwoods.

Best Survey Season: Fall-spring; October-December

Range-wide Distribution: Coastal plain from North Carolina south to Florida and west to Texas.

Conservation Status: A Southeastern Coastal Plain endemic, this taxon is threatened by an increase in competing grass-sedge and woody vegetation which develops in the absence of fire. Drainage of sites would eliminate this species.

Protection and Management: To maintain high quality habitat, growing season prescribed fires should occur every 2-3 years.

References: Clewell 1985, FNAI 2010, Pace 2017, Radford et al. 1968, Weakley 2015, Wunderlin et al. 2011