

GIANT ORCHID

Pteroglossaspis ecristata (Fernald) Rolfe

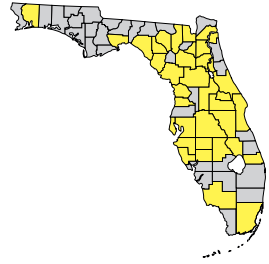
Synonym: *Eulophia ecristata* (Fernald) Ames

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G2/S2

Legal Status: US—Mgmt Concern FL—Threatened

Wetland Status: US—none FL—UPL



Dan Hipes

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with 2 - 4 **basal leaves** 6 - 28 inches long and 0.5 - 1.5 inches wide, erect, pleated, with 3 - 5 strong veins. **Flower stalk** 1 - 5.5 feet tall, leafless except for a few bracts, with a terminal spike of 5 - 30 flowers. **Flowers** twisted in toward the stalk, with a stiff floral bract, 2.5 inches long, beneath each flower. **Sepals and petals** yellow-green, folded forward over the lip; **lip** 3-lobed, without a crest, the prominent central lobe maroon with green margins. **Fruit** a rounded capsule, pointed upwards.

Similar Species: In flower, giant orchid resembles no other species. Its leaves resemble those of other orchids, such as grasspink (*Calopogon tuberosus*), wild coco (*Eulophia alta*), a S FL wetland species, and pinepink (*Bletia purpurea*), found mostly in pine rocklands and cypress swamps. Giant orchid leaves resemble those of saw palmetto seedlings, but are softer.

Related Rare Species: Over 70 orchid species are listed as threatened or endangered in FL.

Giant orchid

Pteroglossaspis ecristata

Habitat: Sandhill, scrub, pine flatwoods, pine rocklands.

Best Survey Season: Flowers July–September, fruits September–November.

Range-wide Distribution: FL, NC, SC, GA, AL, MS, LA, Cuba. Plants have not been seen in many of the mapped FL counties in several decades.

Conservation Status: Historically known from many managed areas, but seen recently in only a few.

Protection & Management: Use prescribed fire to create sunny openings and reduce competition from woody species. Avoid soil-disturbing activities such as bedding and plowing fire lanes.

References: Coile 2000, IRC 1999, Luer 1972, McCartney 1992a, Sorrie 1993, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

