

## HIDDEN ORCHID

*Heterotaxis sessilis* (Swartz) F. Barros

**Synonyms:** *Heterotaxis crassifolia* Lindl.;

*Maxillaria sessilis* (Sw.) Fawc. & Rendle;

*Maxillaria crassifolia* (Lindl.) Reichenb. f.

**Family:** Orchidaceae (orchid)

**FNAI Ranks:** G4/S1

**Legal Status:** US-none; FL-Endangered



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 30 cm long, leathery, with a prominent, keeled midrib; several leaves per stem. **Flowers** about 13 mm long, yellow, waxy with 3 oblong sepals, 2 narrower pointed petals, and a wavy-margined lip; solitary and hidden between bases of leaves. **Fruit** 2.5 cm 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

*Heterotaxis sessilis*

**Habitat:** Epiphytic on trunks and high branches in cypress swamps and sloughs in Collier County.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring-fall; 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 and 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.

hidden orchid

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