

FLORIDA KEYS LADIES'-TRESSES

Mesadenus lucayanus (Britton) Schlechter

Synonyms: *Spiranthes polyantha* Reichenb. f.;

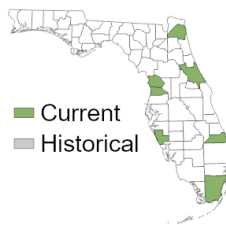
Mesadenus polyanthus (Reichenb. f.)

Schlechter

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G4G5/S1S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Paul Martin Brown

Field Description: Inconspicuous, perennial **herb** with 1 - 3 oval, short-stalked, satiny green, **basal leaves**, 2 - 11 cm long, that appear in the fall and wither away by spring. **Flowers** 10 - 40, loosely spiraled in a frail, slender spike up to 30 cm tall. **Flowers** tiny, greenish-brown to purple; **sepals** widely spreading; **petals** pointed, curved backwards at the tips; **lip** pointed, gray-green, fading to rose at the base. **Fruit** an oval, erect capsule.

Similar Species: Cranichis ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes cranichoides*, syn.: *Mesadenus cranichoides*) has 4 - 6 greenish-purple basal leaves; flowers are greenish-brown except for the white, pink-spotted lip; lip is square-tipped or bluntly tipped.

Related Rare Species: Tall neottia (*Spiranthes elata*, syn.: *Mesadenus elatus*), state-endangered, has 6 - 7 long-stalked, basal leaves; flower stalk to 50 cm tall; and brown flowers with a white lip. Also see southern ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes torta*) in this guide.

Habitat: Dry, calcareous hammocks and coastal middens.

Florida Keys ladies'-tresses

Mesadenus lucayanus

Best Survey Season: Winter-spring; late January - March. Very difficult to see at any time.

Range-wide Distribution: FL, West Indies, Mexico, Central America.

Conservation Status: Seven populations are known, all on conservation areas.

Protection and Management: Avoid logging or grazing in mesic hammocks. Protect rockland and maritime hammocks from development. Eradicate exotic pest plants.

References: Coile 2000, IRC 1999, Luer 1972, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

