

SOUTHERN TWAYBLADE

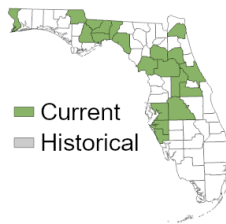
Neottia bifolia (Raf.) Baumbach

Synonyms: *Listera australis* Lindl.

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G5/S3S4

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Threatened



A small plant growing to be about 8 - 16 cm tall. Two sessile opposite leaves form at base of stem; flowers range in color from maroon to green. Bottomland forest at Joe Budd Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

Field Description: A small **terrestrial orchid** usually 16 cm tall or less, with a bronze stem and one pair of sessile, opposite, oval **leaves** in the center of the stem. Up to 25 small, red-maroon (or pale green) **flowers** are borne along the upper part of the stem in a raceme; **lip** 6 - 10 mm long, lacking prominent teeth near the base (but with 2 vertically-oriented lobes); usually cleft about two-thirds its length, the two lobes linear, with acute apices; **pedicels** and **raceme axis** glandular-puberulent; **sepals** and **petals** 1 - 2 mm long; **fruits** are capsules with large seeds.

Similar Species: Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*) has very similar oppositely arranged leaves but is a trailing plant with white flowers and red fruits.

Related Rare Species: There are numerous rare orchids that occur in the Florida panhandle, but none of which share the same characters and bloom time of southern twayblade.

southern twayblade

Neottia bifolia

Habitat: Low moist woodlands such as bottomland forests, baygalls, wet flatwoods, ravines, banks of streams and hydric hammocks.

Best Survey Season: Flowering January - March; fruiting January - April.

Range-wide Distribution: Mainly a Southeastern Coastal Plain species, from NJ south to west-central peninsular FL and west to eastern TX, but also scattered inland of the Coastal Plain and north into VT and southern Canada. In FL, southern twayblade is known to occur as far west as Escambia and south to Sarasota County.

Conservation Status: Southern twayblade has been vouchered throughout Florida. The species is probably more common, but it is likely over-looked due to its diminutive stature, ability to blend into its natural environment, and its narrow winter bloom period. Development has decreased habitat on private lands.

Protection and Management: Ecotones to hardwood hammocks should be kept open with fire, and hammocks should be protected from canopy disturbance and rooting by feral hogs. Since reproductive individuals are more likely to be found along trails where they may receive more sunlight, care should be taken while maintaining vehicle and foot trails to avoid damage to these plants.

References: Luer 1972, Kunzer et al. 2009, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.



Flowers in terminal raceme; small recurved petals about 1 mm in length; lip petal extends about 1 cm to split lobes. Hydric hammock at Caravelle Ranch Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.



Flowers bilaterally symmetrical range in color from maroon to green. Hydric hammock at Aucilla Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.



Growing in bottomland seepage forest at Joe Budd Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.