

FIRE LADIES'-TRESSES

Spiranthes igniorchis M.C. Pace

Synonyms: none

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G1?/S1?

Legal Status: US-none FL-none

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-none



Lily Fulton

Field Description: Herbaceous, acaulescent orchid 22-43 cm tall with few, basal **leaves** held upright that are usually withered by the time of flowering. **Leaves** are shiny-green, linear-lanceolate, acuminate, and approximately 2 cm long and 0.5 cm wide. **Inflorescence** is a raceme with flowers occurring in a single row that is slightly to moderately coiled. **Flowers** open beginning from the base of the inflorescence to the top. **Sepals** are white and pubescent with lateral sepals held in-line with flowers; dorsal **petals** are white and lanceolate, labellum is white to yellow, ruffled to undulate on the margin, and glabrous. The **fruit** is a light brown capsule.

Similar Species: Giant spiral ladies'-tresses (*S. longilabris*) can be distinguished by its less strongly coiled inflorescence, larger flowers, longer sepals and petals, and flowering time of late October- December, versus August to September for Fire Ladies'-tresses. Lace-lip ladies'-tresses (*S. laciniata*) has a lacinate margin on the labellum, lateral sepals that are held below the rest of the flower, and earlier

flowering time, typically peaking in June.

Related Rare Species: There are several rare species of *Spiranthes* that are listed as endangered or threatened in the state including small ladies'-tresses (*S. brevilabris*), Florida ladies'-tresses (*S. floridana*), lace-lip ladies'-tresses (*S. laciniata*), giant spiral ladies'-tresses (*S. longilabris*), October ladies'-tresses (*S. ovalis*), southern ladies'-tresses (*S. torta*), and little ladies'-tresses (*S. tuberosa*).

Habitat: Dry prairies

Best Survey Season: Flowering occurs August-September.

Range-wide Distribution: This species is endemic to Florida and is only known to occur in Polk and Okeechobee counties.

Conservation Status: Known only from a few locations in protected areas of south-central Florida, this newly discovered species is very rare and has seldom been observed. Threats include feral hog rooting, cattle grazing, and off-road vehicle use all of which cause high levels of ground disturbance. Surveys are needed to better understand the scope and severity of the threats, the current population size, extent of occurrences, and population trends.

Protection and Management: Any additional populations found on private lands should be protected and managed to incorporate burning and careful invasive species control. Surveys to locate new populations of this species are needed; appropriate habitat within Kissimmee Prairie, Avon Park AFR, and other conservation areas in Polk, Okeechobee, Highlands, and possibly adjacent counties should be searched.

References: Pace et. al. 2017, Weakley et al. 2020