

## GIANT SPIRAL LADIES'-TRESSES

*Spiranthes longilabris* Lindl.

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Orchidaceae (orchid)

**FNAI Ranks:** G3/S3

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



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**Field Description:** Perennial herb with a single erect stem to about 25.4 cm tall. Leaves are basal, linear to narrowly lanceolate, 3 - 10 cm long. Five or more flowers borne on terminal spikes, only slightly rotating around the stem if at all. Flowers are white with a tinge of yellow, sepals conspicuously spreading horizontally. The whole plant, including flowers, typically lack trichomes but if present will be capitate; this is a distinguishing characteristic. Flowers from late October-December, often with withered leaves.

**Similar Species:** All of the *Spiranthes* species are similar. Only *S. floridana* and *S. vernalis* also have white flowers with horizontally spreading sepals. *S. floridana* has obovate basal leaves and glabrous flowers that open April - May. *S. vernalis* has a pubescent raceme with non-capitate trichomes on flowers that open in the spring. *S. igniorchis*, described in 2017, is shorter overall, has shorter sepals, blooms August - September, and is only known from Polk County.

**Related Rare Species:** *Spiranthes laciniata* and *S. tuberosa* are state-threatened species. *S. adnata*, *S. brevilabris*, *S. costaricensis*, *S. elata*, *S. ovalis*, *S. polyantha*, and *S. torta* are state-endangered species. *S. igniorchis* is a newly described species known only from Polk County.

**Habitat:** Wet prairies and flatwoods.

**Best Survey Season:** Fall-spring; October-December

**Range-wide Distribution:** Coastal plain from North Carolina south to Florida and west to Texas.

**Conservation Status:** A Southeastern Coastal Plain endemic, this taxon is threatened by an increase in competing grass-sedge and woody vegetation which develops in the absence of fire. Drainage of sites would eliminate this species.

**Protection and Management:** To maintain high quality habitat, growing season prescribed fires should occur every 2-3 years.

**References:** Clewell 1985, FNAI 2010, Pace 2017, Radford et al. 1968, Weakley 2015, Wunderlin et al. 2011