

## OCTOBER LADIES'-TRESSES

*Spiranthes ovalis* var. *erostellata* Lindl.

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Orchidaceae (orchid)

**FNAI Ranks:** G5?T4?/SNR

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



Inflorescence tightly spiraled. Growing in a wet flatwoods at Snipe Island Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

**Field Description:** Perennial **herb** to 16 - 25 cm tall; **rachis** of inflorescence with some or all hairs gland-tipped (capitate or clavate); **column** green; **flowers** greater than 5.0 mm long, gaping only from beyond the middle, the tubular portion greater than 3 mm long; **lip** centrally white, lacking **papillae** on the upper surface near the middle; **rostellum** and **viscidium** absent; viscidium linear; **sepals** 3.5 - 5.0 mm long

**Similar Species:** Fragrant ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes odorata*) is a larger plant with fragrant flowers and flat lateral sepals, often growing in standing water of floodplain swamp, basin swamp, and hydric hammock.

**Related Rare Species:** October ladiestresses (*Spiranthes ovalis* var. *ovalis*) has the rachis of inflorescence with some or all hairs gland-tipped (capitate or clavate); column green; flowers greater than 5.0 mm long, gaping only from beyond the middle, the tubular portion greater than 3 mm long; lip centrally white, lacking papillae on the upper surface near the middle; rostellum and viscidium present; viscidium linear; sepals 4.0 - 6.1 mm long.

## October ladies'-tresses

## *Spiranthes ovalis* var. *erostellata*

**Habitat:** Swamp forests, bottomland forests, hammocks, ravine forests.

**Best Survey Season:** Flowering and fruiting August - November.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Fairly widespread in southeastern North America, ranging from South-central PA, NY, MI, and IL south to Panhandle FL, southern MS, southern LA, and eastern TX.

**Conservation Status:** The species is currently known from only a few sites in north Florida and the panhandle, where plants typically occur singly or in small groups. Forestry operations in hardwood hammocks and pine hardwood bottomland forest stands are the greatest threat to this species.

**Protection and Management:** Protect hardwood hammocks and bottomland forest stands from forestry operations, allow prescribed fire to burn into ecotones between wet flatwoods and hammock, and have an active management plan for treating invasive species within the habitat.

**References:** Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.



Lip centrally white; sepals 3.5 - 5 mm long. Wet flatwoods at Snipe Island Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.



Inflorescence with up to 50 small, white flowers arranged in a tight spiral. Wet flatwoods at Snipe Island Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.



Growing in wet flatwoods at Snipe Island Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.