

SOUTHERN LADIES'-TRESSES

Spiranthes torta (Thunb.) Garay & Sweet

Synonyms: *Spiranthes tortilis* (Sw.) L.C. Richard

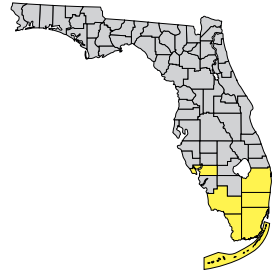
Ibidium tortile (Sw.) House

Family: Orchidaceae (orchid)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S1

Legal Status: US—none FL—Endangered

Wetland Status: US—FACU FL—FACW



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Erect, perennial **herb** with 2 - 3 grass-like **basal leaves** to 8 inches long; **stem leaves** small, bract-like. **Flowers** 30 - 60 in a single row, spiraled or one-sided in a slender spike up to 16 inches long. **Flowers** tubular, white with a green “throat.” **Sepals** white, **petals** white and green, narrow, and pointed; **lip** rounded with a wavy margin and green center.

Similar Species: Several ladies'-tresses species in S FL have white flowers in a single, spiral row; most have a yellow lip. Ames' ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes amesiana*) has a green lip with a fringed margin. Giant ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes praecox*) often has a green-striped lip; it has numerous erect leaves, and flowers in early spring.

Related Rare Species: More than 70 other species of native orchids are rare in FL.

Southern ladies'-tresses

Spiranthes torta

Habitat: Pine rockland, marl prairie, edges of rockland hammock.

Best Survey Season: Flowers May–June.

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

Conservation Status: Known from fewer than 10 sites, 4 on conservation lands.

Protection & Management: Burn pine rocklands every 3 - 7 years. Purchase and protect remaining fragments of rockland. Enforce plant protection laws and prosecute plant poachers. Control exotic pest plants.

References: Coile 2000, Correll and Correll 1982, IRC 1999, Luer 1972, McCartney 1992a, Small 1933, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

