FYN Topic: Newly Naturalized Ground Orchid

Question: An uninvited guest sprung up again in one of my mulch beds. It looks like a bulb about the size of a medium onion with a long flower stalk and miniscule leaves. Should I destroy it? Last year I pulled up several without knowing what it is. I’m sure I didn’t plant them but wonder where it came from?
—Tom C. N. Naples—

Answer: Keep an eye out for this alien invader, still rare but becoming more of a problem. Thought to be an escapee orchid from hobbyist growers, it is classified as a newly naturalized ground orchid in Florida, called *Eulophia graminea* (no common name yet). It was first discovered on the east coast in a residential garden in Miami in 2007. We’ve seen several spring up unexpectedly this year in Lee County, including one found growing in the herb garden at Terry Park.

Look for a bulb-like stem between two leaf nodes, called a pseudobulb. The orchid favors open, warm and sunny spots, often seen partially buried in a thick woodchip mulch layer. Once mature, the pseudobulb produces a long, single shoot or stalk with three to five grass-like leaves and multiple tiny orchid flowers. By growing this plant you might be growing a future menace to your garden. Pull it out by hand to control. You may need to remove more plants as they sprout up.

Useful Links
http://www.floridayards.org
http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu
http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/
http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml

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