

Gentian Noddingcap (*Triphora gentianoides*)

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Synonyms: *Arethusa gentianoides*, *Limodorum gentianoides*, *Pogonia cubensis*, *Pogonia gentianoides*, *Triphora cubensis*

Family: Orchidaceae

Habitat

Gentian noddingcap (*Triphora gentianoides*) is a small native ground orchid. It is found in most counties of South Florida and in Manatee and Pinellas counties in Central Florida. It is native to the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America and northern South America. In Florida, gentian noddingcap is found close to human habitats mostly in mulch and decomposing litters but also in sand and gravel. Gentian noddingcap is not cultivated and is considered by some gardeners to be a nuisance. Some taxonomists have questioned whether or not it is actually native to Florida. It was first discovered by Charles Torrey Simpson in 1919 and for many years it was known only from the Kendall-Coral Gables area of Miami-Dade County. The fact that it was first found in Miami-Dade County and was only known in urban areas suggests that it could be an introduced exotic orchid.

Growth Habit

The species is a perennial but is not visible for most of the year. It is mostly seen from May to September when it rises from underground tubers to flower and fruit. After fruiting the stem collapses and the plant once again dies back to its underground tuber to reemerge the following season.



Mid June

Tubers

The tubers are horizontal rhizomic stems modified for food storage and having nodes and buds. They are fleshy, oblong and typically 1 to 3 inches long and 0.75 inch wide.



Tuber and stubby roots. Late June

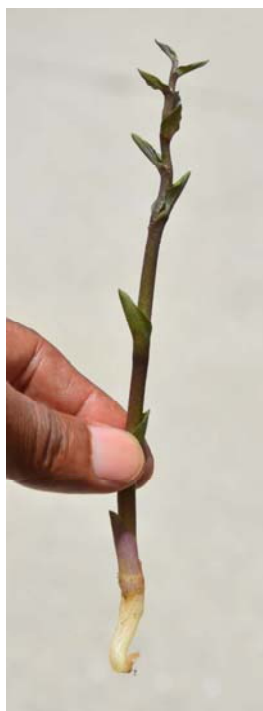


Tubers. Late June

Stems and Leaves

The stems are long, slender and succulent. They emerge directly from the ground usually in May through September. Most often the stems are unbranched or may rarely have two to three small branches. They are commonly 3 to 6 inches tall and 0.13 to 0.5 inch at the widest point. Stem color is green often tinged with brown or purple or predominately purple.

The leaves are few, cauline, alternate, entire, and clasping having no petioles. They are ovate, fleshy, and point upward. Leaf size is approximately 0.75 inch long and 0.38 inch wide.



Stem with leaves



Clasping, alternate leaves



Ovate leaves point upward

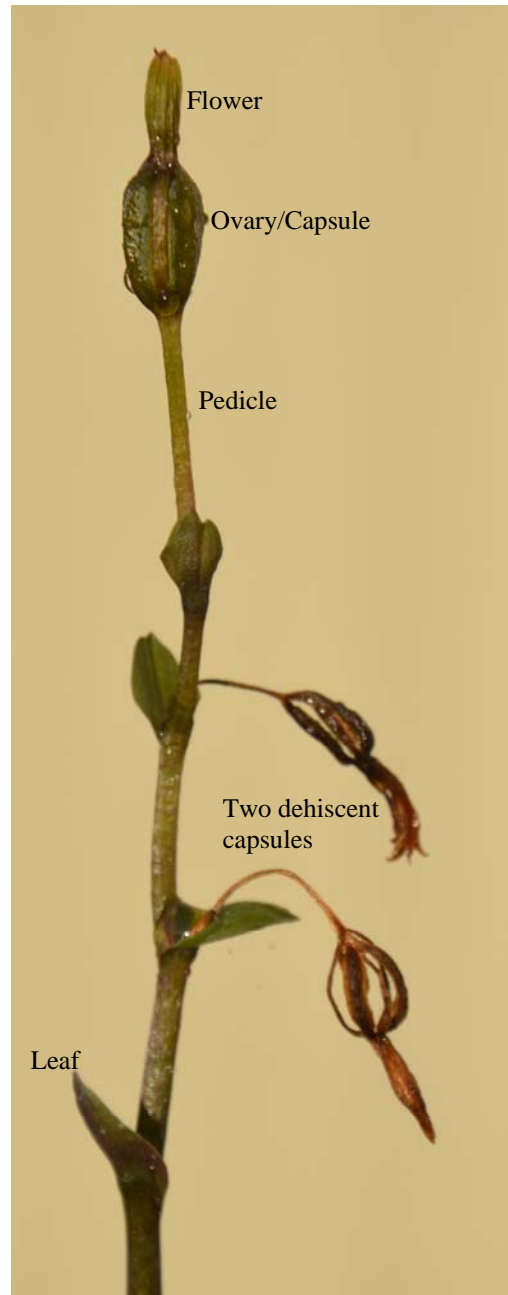
Flowers and Fruits

The plant is dormant and unseen for much of the year except when flowering and fruiting mostly from May to September. Flowering is successive. Flowers are commonly grouped together in corymbose racemes of three to ten flowers at the ends of the stems. Solitary flowers may also appear along the upper leaf axils. The flowers are small, erect, greenish white to pale green and are never fully opened. They become partially opened in the mornings and are closed in the evening.

Each flower is approximately 0.4 inch long and 0.2 inch wide. It is attached above to a swollen ovary, and below the ovary is a pedicel measuring 1.0 inch long. Flowers are thought to be self pollinating and after pollination the ovary develops into an erect capsule with many minute seeds. Capsules are 0.4 to 0.75 inch long, ellipsoid, dehiscent, breaking open freely with the wind scattering the seeds.



Plants beginning to flower. Early June



Flowering plant morphology



Roger Hammer

Flowering plants



Linda Tait

Flowering plants. Late June



Flowering at stem end. Early June



Flowers and capsules. Early June

References

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Ground Orchids

Eulophia graminea

Leafless Beaked Ladies' Tresses Orchid

Monk Orchid

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This fact sheet was reviewed by Roger Hammer, Naturalist, Miami-Dade County.

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