

Pale grasspink

(*Calopogon pallidus*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Pale grasspink is a terrestrial orchid that occurs naturally in bogs and wet flatwoods, prairies and roadsides. It shares the same bloom time (spring into summer) and habitat as its cousin, Tuberous grasspink (*Calopogon tuberosus*), but can be distinguished by its flowers, which are smaller, paler, and have reflexed sepals.

Pale grasspink's flowers may be white to pale pink to deep purplish-pink. Petals are broadly lanceolate and falcate. A labellum (liplike petal) occurs on the top of the flower (not the bottom where it occurs in most genera) and bears a tuft of yellow stamen-like bristles. Sepals reflex forward and may be wavy. Leaves are basal, grasslike and usually absent once flowering begins. Seeds are borne in capsules.

The pollination process of the *Calopogon* genus is unique. The stamen-like bristles that form on the lip are designed to attract pollinators, but they offer no nectar or pollen. Instead, when a bee lands on the hairs, the lip swings down and loosely traps the bee, forcing it to crawl out across the reproductive parts. Pollen is then deposited on the bee; if the bee is already carrying pollen, it will make contact with the flower's stigma and (hopefully) pollinate the flower.

The genus name *Calopogon* is from the Greek *kalos*, or "beautiful," and *pogon*, or "beard." It refers to the tuft of hairlike structures on the flower's lip.

Family: Orchidaceae (Orchid family)

Native range: Jefferson County west to Escambia County; Baker and Nassau south into Collier and Broward counties

To see where natural populations of Pale grasspink have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 7–10

Soil: Moist to inundated acidic soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: up to 2' tall

Garden tips: Pale grasspink is not commercially available. It is best observed in its natural environment.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich