

Fragrant pogonia

(*Cleistesiopsis oricamporum*)

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

Fragrant pogonia, also commonly referred to as Coastal plain pogonia, is a delicate and state-listed endangered terrestrial orchid found in the wet flatwoods, savannahs and bogs of Northern Florida. In six northeastern counties, it often occurs alongside its larger and slightly later-blooming relative, Rosebud orchid (*Cleistesiopsis divaricata*). Fragrant pogonia's primary pollinators are bumble bees, who are attracted to the yellow crest of its labellum, a ruse that mimics pollen. Upon entering the flower, the bee gets smeared with a sticky substance, and as it backs out of the flower, the granular pollen sticks to them to be carried on to the next blossom.



Photo by Emily Bell

Flowers have three narrow spreading sepals that average 1.5 inches long and can range in color from light brownish-yellow to burgundy. Three petals form a tube. The top two petals are light pink to almost white and curve up at the tip. The lower petal, or labellum, is also very light pink and has purple to dark pinkish veins. Smooth light green stems bear only a few alternate oblong leaves.

Cleistesiopsis oricamporum was described in 2009 when it was split from *Cleistesiopsis bifaria*. The original range of *C. bifaria* was much of the Southeast US. With the new species described, *C. bifaria* now pertains to the mountain counties of the Virginias through Kentucky and Tennessee and south to Georgia. *C. oricamporum* is considered a distinct species found in the coastal and piedmont counties of Virginia, south to Florida and west to Louisiana. Justification for this split was based on both genetic and morphological differences, with *C. oricamporum* being somewhat larger and having a sweet vanilla fragrance that is lacking in *C. bifaria*.

Family: Orchidaceae (Orchid family)

Native range: Panhandle into Northeast Florida and south to Lake County.

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

Hardiness: Zone 8A–9B

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist and acidic

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: Up to 1 foot tall

Fragrant pogonia is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see them.



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