

# Yellow fringed orchid

(*Platanthera ciliaris*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Yellow fringed orchid is a state-threatened terrestrial orchid found in wet prairies, seepage bogs, ditches and wet pine flatwoods. Its showy flowers typically bloom in summer and peak in August. Although not common, Yellow fringed orchids tend to grow in small colonies resulting in a small mass of bright color. .



Photo by Floyd Griffith

Yellow fringed orchid's flowers are orange to bright yellow with a heavily fringed lower lip. Petals are also fringed, but less dramatically. The anther is split and obvious. A spur extending behind the lip is filled with nectar. Flowers are born in a terminal raceme atop a stout, rigid stem. Racemes may grow to 6 inches long and contain 50 or more individual flowers. The bright green to bluish-green leaves are lanceolate and long (between 8 and 12 inches) at the base, decreasing in size as they ascend the stem. Leaves are alternately arranged. The fruit is a capsule.

Butterflies are the primary pollinator and use their long tongues to access the nectar. The pollen attaches to the insect's eyes and is carried to the next flower.

Two other species of *Platanthera* resemble the Yellow fringed orchid, and have similar habitat and bloom time. The Crested fringed orchid (*P. cristata*) and Chapman's fringed orchid (*P. chapmanii*). In areas where these species' ranges overlap, spur length can be used as a distinguishing feature. *P. ciliaris* has the longest spur, exceeding the length of the flower's ovary, which runs from the flower's petals back to where the flower connects with the stem. The spur of *P. chapmanii* is about equivalent to the length of the ovary and in *P. cristata* the spur is only about half as long as the ovary.

**Family:** Orchidaceae (Orchid family)

**Native range:** Nearly throughout Panhandle and peninsula to Lake Okeechobee

To see where natural populations of Yellow fringed orchid have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist to wet acidic soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade

**Growth habit:** up to 3' tall

Yellow fringed orchids are not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see them.

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