

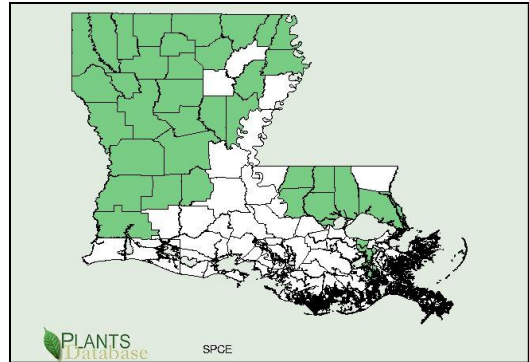
Native Orchid of the Month—November

Spiranthes cernua (nodding lady's tresses)

The nodding ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes cernua*) is the most common species of *Spiranthes* in eastern North America—one of 12 species occurring in Louisiana—with populations occurring from Quebec and Nova Scotia west to southern North Dakota and south to Florida and Texas. Although this terrestrial orchid can occur in a variety of habitats, it is commonly found in open woodlands, prairies, meadows, old fields, cemeteries, and lawns with acidic sandy, moist soils.



Few people would guess that *Spiranthes* flowers are orchids, a fact that may help save them from collectors. The narrow, grass-like leaves are 8–10 inches long, growing from the base of the plant.



The flowers are white and grow along the upper part of the slender, erect stem, which is 1 to 2 feet tall. Three to four flowers occur per cycle of spiral, forming a dense spike 6 inches long. The individual flowers are about 1/2 inch long, curve downward slightly, nodding. The lip is about 1/2 inch long, with a flaring, crimped margin.



Flowering occurs from July through November. They produce sweet, vanilla-scented, spires of white flowers that last for weeks and hold up well as cut flowers. They adapt easily to regular orchid culture. Blooms reliably every fall with attractive spirals of pure-white, long-lasting, fragrant flowers on a perfectly straight stem, and if tended multiply quickly into a beautiful specimen plant!

