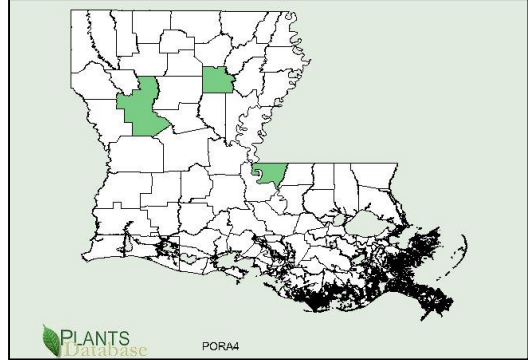


## Native Orchid of the Month—December

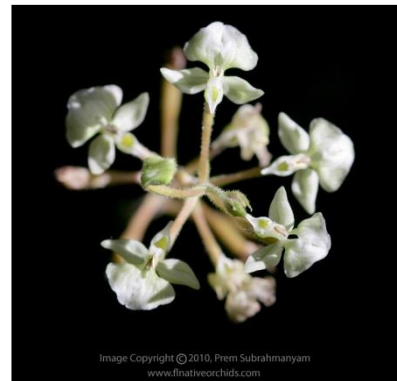
### *Ponthieva racemosa* (hairy shadow witch)

Shadow witch orchid (*Ponthieva racemosa*) is rare to very rare at least throughout its North American range, and is found from southeastern Virginia south to Florida and west to southeastern Texas. From these areas of the United States the species ranges south into Central and South America.



The evergreen basal rosettes of leaves grow in rather swampy areas, and are all that is seen of this plant except during blooming. Plants reproduce vegetatively via runners, as well as sexually via flowers and seeds and can form extensive colonies over time. The flowers of *P. racemosa* are pleasantly fragrant, smelling faintly of citrus.

Shadow witch orchid has a basal rosette of oblong to elliptic leaves ranging from 1 to 6 inches in length. When wet, the upper leaf surface is succulent in appearance otherwise it is thin and papery when dry. The flower stalk is pubescent and reddish brown to purplish or greenish in color. Shadow witch orchid flowers are whitish green.



The petals are clawed and incurved on the outer margin at the base while constricted near the apex. Their dorsal sepal is slightly joined to the petals at the apex. The petals are free or sometimes fused to lower flanks of the column.

It flowers in the fall and winter (September to February) in moist, shady hammocks, swamps, ravines, wet savannas, and pine forests.

