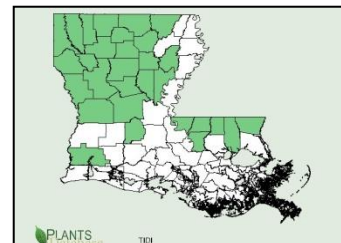


Native Orchid of the Month—February

Tipularia discolor (crippled crane fly orchid)

Tipularia discolor or crippled crane fly orchid is widely distributed throughout the eastern United States and it is found across most of northern Louisiana (see map). Its habitat is in humus-rich soil of deciduous woodlands; frequently in sandy, acid oak-pine woods near streams.



The plant is easy to identify during the winter months because of its distinctive leaves. The dull to shiny green leaves (sometimes with raised purple spots) and purple on the bottom side show up well against a brown ground cover of dead leaves and needles. They appear as single



oval shaped leaves that emerge in autumn (September and October), over-winter, and disappear in the late spring. There are no leaves at the time the orchid blooms.

Usually, the leaves wither away by the end of April. The flowering stem is 15 to 20 inches tall, erect, herbaceous, greenish-brown, glabrous, and essentially leafless. It originates from a small corm to flower from June to September and may have up to 40 small, greenish-purple flowers with a spindly, fly-like appearance. It is one of few orchids with distinctly asymmetrical flowers.



Moths pollinate the plant. The flowers have pollinaria. Pollinaria are specialized structures containing pollen found in orchids. The moth travels to the flower, the pollinaria attaches to the moth's eyes, and then the moth can transfer the pollinaria to another flower for pollination.

