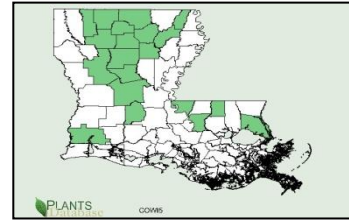


Native Orchid of the Month—March

Corallorrhiza wisteriana
(spring coralroot)

Corallorrhiza wisteriana (spring coralroot) is a saprophyte and is among the few flowering plants that have no green color at any time, but support themselves, as mushrooms and toadstools do, on the dead remains of other plants in the soil.

The flowering stems are yellow to purplish and stand anywhere from 2 to 8 inches tall, bearing small flowers that might reach 1/3 inch from top-to-bottom at the most. The sepals and petals form a hood-like structure over the lip and are a greenish-brown color. The lip contrasts nicely with these, being a snowy white with small purple spots. Flowers are rapidly pollinated (or perhaps self-pollinate) and do not last long.



Spring coralroot can be found throughout much of the lower 48 states of the United States, excluding portions of New England and the far western states. In Louisiana, it is found primarily in the northern wooded portion of the State. The plants are difficult to locate due to their unusual growth cycle. They are most frequently located on sites where there is abundant decaying woody debris.

Spring coralroot blooms as early as January in Louisiana, but may continue through July. The flowers generally only last a few hours. The plants remain dependent on fungi for their entire lives, often hosting their fungi in crystalline, coral-like modified root structures.

