

Native Orchid of the Month—May

*Calopogon tuberosus*

(tuberous grass-pink)

*Calopogon* comes from the Greek words meaning beautiful beard. The prominent hairs, the beard, on the lip identify the species *tuberosus*. This species is a plant of moist areas and is most abundant in pineland bogs. It is known as grass pink because of the long, narrow, grass-like leaves. It grows 2 to 4 feet tall, with 3 or more flowers arranged along the stem. The blossoms are rose-pink to pale orchid and are about 2 inches across.

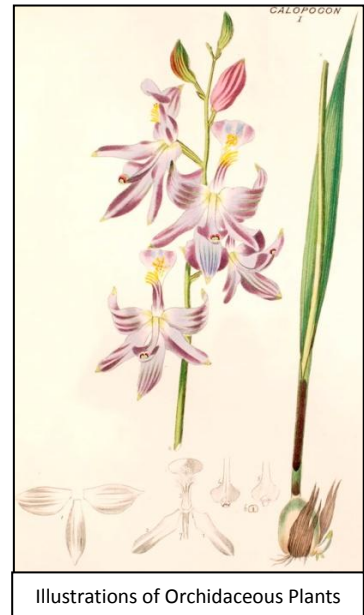


This delicate, sweet-smelling orchid is easily recognized by the bearded lip petal and solitary, grass-like leaf. The flower is



pink to purple, 6-parted, with yellow brushy hairs on the upper petal. The inflorescence a loose, short cluster of 3 to 10 stalked flowers blooming a few at a time. It blooms in June and July.

The plant consists of a small, whitish subterranean corm giving rise to a single, grass-like leaf which clasps basally the flowering stem.



The flowers use a unique mechanism to achieve pollination. Midway up the lip, they bear a tuft of orange-yellow hairs that resembles the pistils and stamens of typical bog-land flowers, while the base of the lip is jointed. The pollinators, deceived by this ruse, land on this tuft, their weight triggering the lip to flex downward along its joint and to drop them onto the column arching below.

*Calopogon tuberosus* is the most variable and widespread species in the genus. It occurs from Manitoba and Newfoundland south to Texas, Florida, the Bahamas, and Cuba.

