

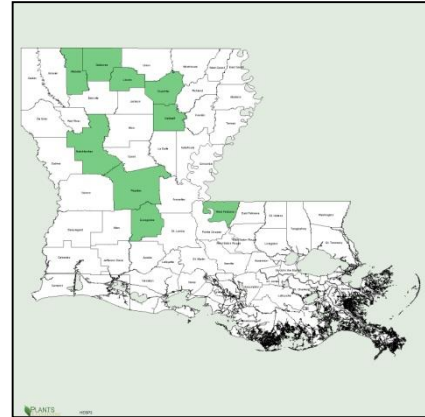
Native Orchid of the Month—June

Hexalectris spicata (spiked crested coralroot)

The *Hexalectris spicata* (spiked crested coralroot) is a saprophytic plant that bears no leaves; instead it lives in a mycotrophic relationship with fungi hosted in its coral-like roots. These fungi, in turn, send out mycelia throughout the soil and infect the roots of other plants, forming a network beneath the forest floor transferring nutrients from one plant to another.



Its habitat includes semi-dry, oak/pine forests, typically with a limestone underlayment. Flowering occurs from April through July.



These saprophytic plants consist of a coralline root bearing a single stalk with multiple one-inch-across flowers. The flowering stems are the only portion of the plant seen above ground, and are typically a bronze-pink with a light, plum-like frosting. The flowers are golden-brown with deeper red-purple pin-stripes in the sepals/petals and have a faint baby powder fragrance. The lip, by contrast is white with purple

stripes on it and bearing seven narrow crests, three on each side of a central crest.

Surprisingly, where it is found, flowering stems numbering in the hundreds can be seen in a good year. Plants are seen sporadically within their habitat, probably resting for a year or more to regain resources from their associated fungi before making the effort again to flower. This seems to be typical of many of the coralroots.

