

## Native Orchid of the Month—July

### *Platanthera clavellata* (small green wood orchid)

This small green wood orchid (*Platanthera clavellata*) is 4 to 16 inches tall (including the flowering stalk) and unbranched. The central stalk is light green and glabrous. Toward the bottom of the stalk, there is a single prominent leaf about 2 to 6 inches long and ½ to 1½ inches across; it is oblanceolate or oblong in shape, smooth along the margins, medium green, and glabrous. Its leaf venation is parallel with a conspicuous central vein. Above this leaf,



the remaining leaves are arranged alternately along the central stalk; they are much reduced in size, often resembling bracts.

Cream to greenish-white, irregular flowers are loosely packed on a raceme about 2 inches long at the top of the stem. Individual flowers are ¼ inch wide; an upper sepal and 2 petals form an enclosing hood over the flower center, 2 small lateral sepals spread out at the sides. The lower lip is nearly rectangular, marginally 3 lobed. At the back is a long, slender, club shaped spur.

The small green wood orchid is petite and beautiful when it is in bloom. Its flowers are arranged in an odd manner along the raceme—they are often twisted to the side, while their long nectar spurs overlap with each other.

Typically, it is found in sphagnum, boggy areas, such as the margin of sandy lakes, peaty swales or meadows. Its range extends over most of the eastern and mid-western North America. It flowers from June through August.

