

Native Orchid of the Month—September

Spiranthes ovalis (October lady's tresses)

Spiranthes ovalis (October lady's tresses) is a small herbaceous orchid that grows to approximately 8 to 16 inches in height. The two to four basal leaves are broad, oblong-elliptic to oblanceolate in shape. Leaves along the stem are 2 to 6 inches in length and are obtuse in shape.



From August through November, terminal flower spikes develop and are somewhat congested and slender and are composed of three or four vertical files of small, pure white flowers. The spikes are tightly spiraled, usually 3 flowers per cycle of spiral. The flowers are individually widely spreading or somewhat deflexed, cylindrical, white or the lip creamy at the middle; sepal and lateral petals, the petal usually widest in the distal third and with one vein; lip about 1/16 inch, ovate-oblong, rounded distally, often somewhat constricted near the middle.

The habitat of *Spiranthes ovalis* is primarily calcareous soils in full sun or partial shade in moist forests, wooded pastures.

