

Manyflowered grasspink

(*Calopogon multiflorus*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Manyflowered grasspink is a state-threatened terrestrial orchid that blooms winter through spring, but most abundantly in March through May. It occurs naturally in dry to wet pine flatwoods and dry prairies. The plant is fire-dependent; blooming typically occurs within several weeks of a burn.

Manyflowered grasspink flowers are borne in numbers of 5 to 15 in a terminal inflorescence. They are very fragrant. Petals are dark pink to magenta. They are widest in the middle of the bloom. A labellum (liplike petal) occurs on the top of the flower (not the bottom where it occurs in most genera) and bears a tuft of yellow stamen-like bristles. Leaves are basal and grasslike. Stems are leafless, slender and up to 12 inches tall. Fruit is a capsule.

The pollination process of the *Calopogon* genus is unique. The stamen-like bristles that form on the lip are designed to attract pollinators, but they offer no nectar or pollen. Instead, when a bee lands on the hairs, the lip swings down and loosely traps the bee, forcing it to crawl out across the reproductive parts. Pollen is then deposited on the bee; if the bee is already carrying pollen, it will make contact with the flower's stigma and (hopefully) pollinate the flower.

The genus name *Calopogon* is from the Greek *kalos*, or "beautiful," and *pogon*, or "beard." It refers to the tuft of hairlike structures on the flower's lip. The species epithet *multiflorus* (as well as its common descriptor, manyflowered) refers to the many flowers that this species produces.

Manyflowered grasspink is Florida's rarest grasspink, due primarily to fire suppression and habitat loss.

Family: Orchidaceae (Orchid family)

Native range: Franklin, Leon, Liberty and Wakulla counties, as well as much of the peninsula

To see where natural populations of Manyflowered grasspink have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 7–10b

Soil: Acidic, sandy to loamy soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 1' tall

Garden tips: Manyflowered grasspink is not available commercially. It is best observed in its natural environment.

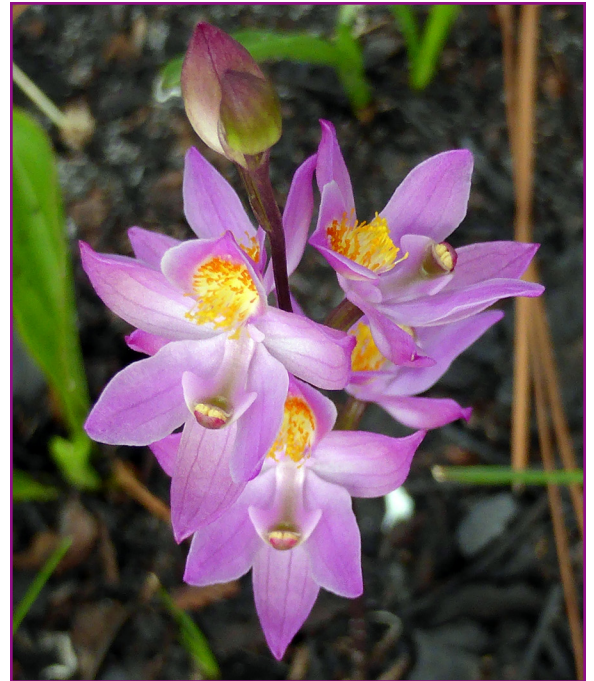


Photo by Eleanor Dietrich