

Yellow fringed orchid

(*Platanthera ciliaris*)

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

Yellow fringed orchid is a state-threatened terrestrial orchid found in wet prairies, seepage bogs, ditches and wet pine flatwoods. Its showy flowers typically bloom in summer and peak in August. Although not common, Yellow fringed orchids tend to grow in small colonies resulting in a small mass of bright color.

Yellow fringed orchid's flowers are orange to bright yellow with a heavily fringed lower lip. Petals are also fringed, but less dramatically. The anther is split and obvious. A spur extending behind the lip is filled with nectar. Flowers are born in a terminal raceme atop a stout, rigid stem. Racemes may grow to 6 inches long and contain 50 or more individual flowers. The bright green to bluish-green leaves are lanceolate and long (between 8 and 12 inches) at the base, decreasing in size as they ascend the stem. Leaves are alternately arranged. The fruit is a capsule.

Butterflies are the primary pollinator and use their long tongues to access the nectar. The pollen attaches to the insect's eyes and is carried to the next flower.

Two other species of *Platanthera* resemble the Yellow fringed orchid, and have similar habitat and bloom time. The Crested fringed orchid (*P. cristata*) has a more limited fringe, while the Yellow fringeless orchid (*P. integra*) has no fringe at all.

Family: Orchidaceae (Orchid family)

Native range: Nearly throughout Panhandle and peninsula to Lake Okeechobee

To see where natural populations of Yellow fringed orchid have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 7–9

Soil: Moist to wet acidic soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: up to 3' tall

Note: Yellow fringed orchids may not be harvested or sold in Florida without a permit.



Photo by Floyd Griffith