



## *Isotria medeoloides* (Pursh) Raf.

### Small Whorled Pogonia

**Habitat:** Mid-succession mixed forests. [Hardwood to mixed forest (forest, upland)]

**Range:** New England south to Georgia, west to Illinois, Missouri, and Michigan.

**Phenology:** Flowers in June.

**Family:** Orchidaceae

**Aids to Identification:** A member of the Orchid family, this low herb has elliptical leaves, 3-8 cm long, arranged in whorls of five. There is one (occasionally two) greenish-yellow flower, about 2 cm long, on a short flowering stalk. The similar *Isotria verticillata* is distinguished by its longer flowering stalk (greater than 1 cm), taller stem (20-30 cm), and longer sepals (3-5 cm). It is vegetatively similar to the common Indian cucumber-root, but can be distinguished by its pale, fleshy stem, unlike the firm, wiry stem of the common species.

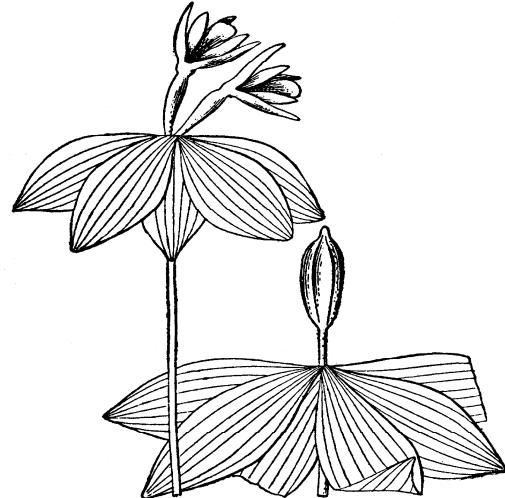


Illustration from Britton & Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, 2nd ed.

**Ecological characteristics:** Small whorled pogonia typically occurs in mid-successional mixed woods with sparse shrub and herb layers and thick leaf litter. It often occurs near intermittent streamlets or where a hardpan impedes water percolation into the soil. Associated understory plants include Indian cucumber-root (*Medeola virginiana*), New York fern (*Thelypteris novaboracensis*), partridge berry (*Mitchella repens*), and rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*).

**Synonyms:** Referred to in some very old treatments as *Isotria affinis* (Austin) Rydberg.

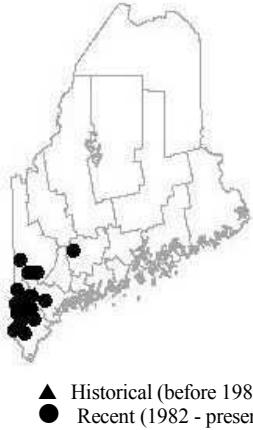
#### Rarity of *Isotria medeoloides*

<b>State Rank:</b>	S2	Imperiled in Maine because of rarity or vulnerability to further decline.
<b>New England Rank:</b>	Division 1	Globally rare plant occurring in New England: Only a few occurrences exist within New England.
<b>Global Rank:</b>	G2	Imperiled globally.

#### Status of *Isotria medeoloides*

<b>Federal Status:</b>	Threatened	Listed as Threatened at the national level.
<b>State Status:</b>	Endangered	Rare and in danger of being lost from the state in the foreseeable future; or federally listed as Endangered. Listing criteria met: Few individuals, At edge of range, Declining populations, Vulnerable to human activity

## Known Distribution in Maine:



This rare plant has been documented from a total of 18 town(s) in the following county(ies): Cumberland, Kennebec, Oxford, York.

**Dates of documented observations are:** 1976, 1985 (3), 1986 (3), 1987 (2), 1988 (2), 1991 (2), 1992, 1993, 1997 (4), 1998 (5), 2000, 2001 (8), 2002 (4).

▲ Historical (before 1982)  
● Recent (1982 - present)

### Reason(s) for rarity:

Unknown; rare throughout its range. This is an extremely rare orchid, often called the rarest orchid in eastern North America.

### Conservation considerations:

Orchids attract some speciality gardeners, and populations are vulnerable to unscrupulous or uneducated collectors. Plants usually do not survive transplanting, and removing them harms the natural population and may cause its eventual disappearance. This orchid has not been successfully propagated, and any plants offered for sale have been dug from the wild. Populations are vulnerable to conversion of their habitat to residential or commercial use, which is partly responsible for the species' rarity. Partial removal of the canopy may be beneficial, as long as subsequent undergrowth does not overgrow the plants.

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The information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 10 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species,  
please contact the Natural Areas Program  
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.





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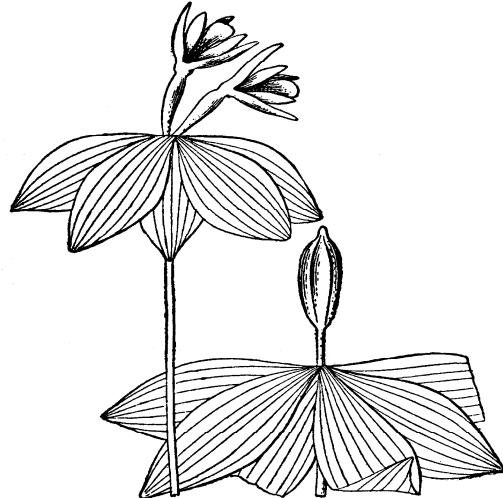


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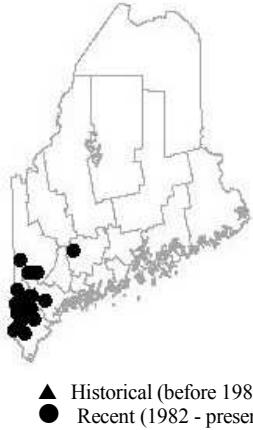
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