

Corkscrew's Super Ghost Orchid

(*Dendrophylax lindenii*)

Discovered in July 2007, the rare Corkscrew "Super" Ghost Orchid (*Dendrophylax lindenii*) has delighted visitors every year since its discovery with multiple blooms throughout the summer, and even a few in other times of the year.

This orchid has drawn attention from around the world as it is the largest ghost orchid discovered so far. The super ghost orchid is located about 50 feet high in the an old growth bald cypress tree, making it one of the highest growing orchids. With an estimated age of 50 to 60 years, it is also one of the oldest.

The ghost orchid received its name because the orchid has no leaves (only roots) and when it blooms, the flowers appears to be floating in mid-air.

Plant Description:

Epiphytic: Grows on other plants, but does not harm them.

Leafless: Although the plant is leafless, the first-year seedlings do possess a small leaf that soon withers as the root mass grows. As the root mass grows, it takes the role of the leaf and actually performs photosynthesis.

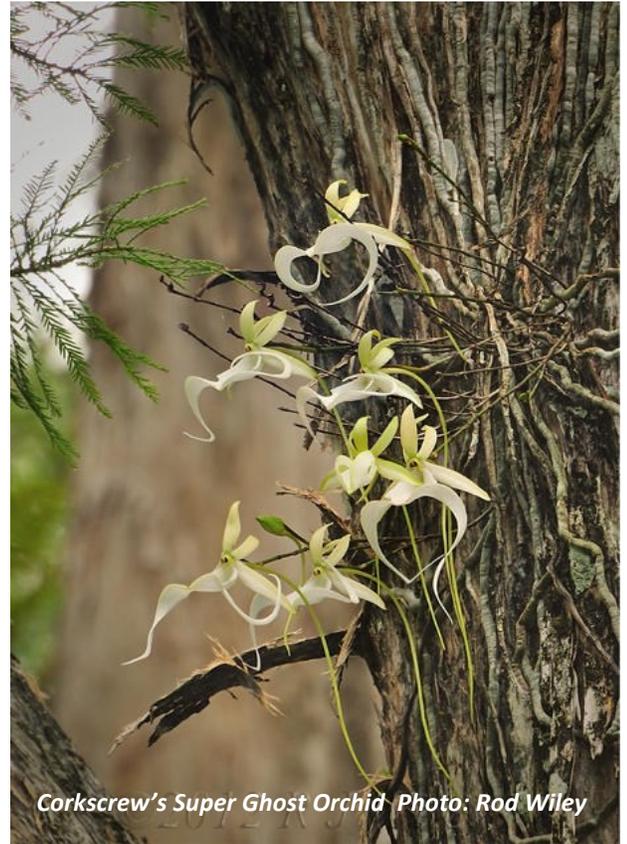
Flowers: White to cream colored and usually 4-1/2 to 5 inches, excluding the spur. They are most fragrant at night. Flowers open in succession, usually 1 or 2 at a time and they can last 10 to 14 days. Sepals and petals similar, lanceolate; lip is 3-lobed, the central lobe triangle and tapering to 2 elongated twisting lobes; the spur slender and elongated to 6 inches long, which resembles the back legs of a jumping frog (hence the other common name: Frog Orchid).

Roots: Gray-green with short white markings and typically about 20 inches long.

Flowering Period: Typically 1 or 2 blooms, but can be as many as 10, and can bloom more than once per season. Normally bloom May through August, but may not bloom every year.

Range: Native to Cuba and South Florida, In Florida, very local in the Fakahatchee/Big Cypress/Corkscrew Swamp areas of Collier and Hendry Counties.

Habitat: Hardwood hammocks and bald cypress swamps. Host trees include pop ash, pond apple, bald cypress, maple, and oak.



Corkscrew's Super Ghost Orchid Photo: Rod Wiley

Status: Centuries of illegal poaching and habitat loss has led to the ghost orchid to be listed as endangered by the state of Florida.

Pollinator: The giant sphinx moth (*Cocytius antaeus*) is the only local insect that has a long enough proboscis (straw-like mouth part) at 4 to 5 inches long.

Seed Dispersal: Dispersed by Wind

Propagation: A process that takes 7 plus years. The growing conditions for mature orchids require very warm temperatures and swamp-like humidity levels year round.

Scientific Name: The scientific name (*lindenii*) is derived from its discoverer, the Belgian plant collector, Jean Jules Linden, who saw the orchid for the first time in Cuba in 1844.

The Orchid Thief: The ghost orchid is the subject of the Susan Orlean's book, *The Orchid Thief*.