

# *Epidendrum conopseum* R. Brown in Aiton f.

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Greenfly Orchid

Orchid Family, ORCHIDACEAE

## LEGAL STATUS:

State: UNUSUAL

Federal: None

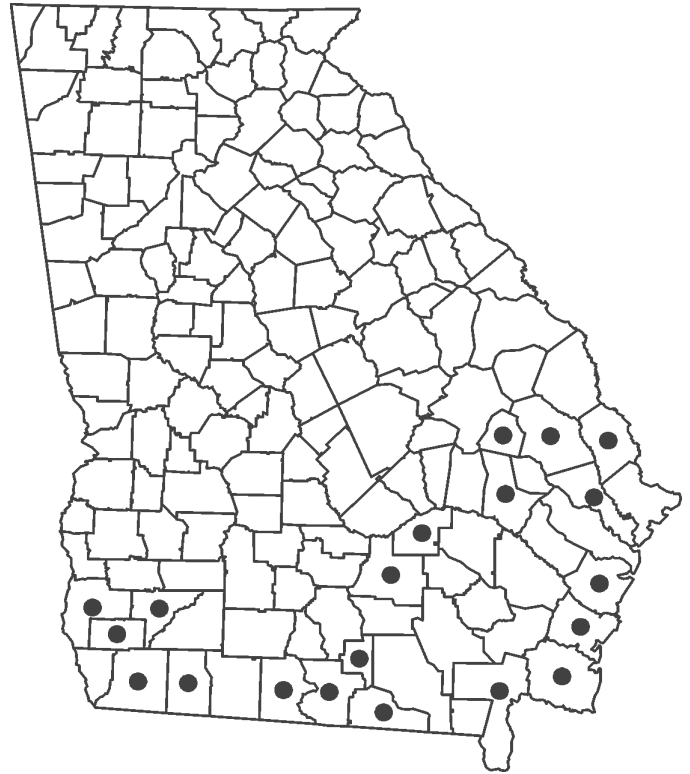
## SYNONYMY:

*Amphiglottis conopsea* (R. Brown in Aiton f.) Small

**RANGE:** Southeastern Coastal Plain from North Carolina to Louisiana; disjunct in eastern Mexico. Recorded from 20 counties in Georgia (see map).

**ILLUSTRATION:** Plant habit, with substrate either tree bark or rock faces, 1x. Source: original drawing by Vicky Holifield.

**DESCRIPTION:** Perennial herb on trees (epiphytic) or rocks (epipetric). The leafy stems extend to 30 cm and are attached to the substrate by a mass of slender roots. The leaves are leathery, evergreen, narrowly elliptic, dull green, 3-10 cm long, and 5-15 mm wide. The flowers are 2-3 cm wide, arranged in a loose terminal cluster (raceme). The three sepals and two lateral petals are mostly yellowish-green, about 1.0-1.2 cm long; the 3-lobed lip petal is tinged with dull purple. The fruit is an elliptic, drooping capsule, 1.5-2.0 cm long, and 0.8-1.0 cm



wide. **Flowering period:** June to July, sporadically to October; **fruiting period:** September to January. **Best search time:** all year, since plants have evergreen leaves.

**HABITAT:** Found in moist to seasonally dry woods on shaded limbs of hardwoods, especially southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) and live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), and the walls of deep sandstone (actually hardened clay known as Altamaha Grit) crevices kept cool by shade and evaporation of moisture.

**SPECIAL IDENTIFICATION FEATURES:** Greenfly orchid is Georgia's only orchid perched on trees, where it is often associated with resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis polypodioides*, more widely known as *Polypodium polypodioides*) and air plants (*Tillandsia* spp.). When terrestrial (on rock), greenfly orchid is distinguished from our other orchids by its evergreen, leafy, flowering stem with inconspicuously colored (greenish-yellow, sometimes with purplish tinge), loosely arranged flowers.

**MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:** Of horticultural interest: protect from removal by irresponsible persons.

**REMARKS:** *Epidendrum* is a genus of roughly 500 species found in the warmer portions of the New World. The genus name derives from the Greek words for "on tree," appropriate for a group comprised of non-parasitic plants that grow perched on trees (epiphytes). Most of the species are showier than the present species, and many are cultivated. This species was described in 1813, based on plants collected earlier in Florida by William Bartram. *Epidendrum conopseum* is the most frost-tolerant of our epiphytic orchids, and therefore is sometimes collected from the wild in excess by unscrupulous or unthinking orchid growers or dealers. It has also sustained significant habitat loss due to clearing of forest land, chiefly for conversion to agricultural land or pine plantation.

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

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- Luer, C. A. 1972. The Native Orchids of Florida. New York Botanical Garden, Bronx. 295 pp.
- Radford, A. E., H. E. Ahles, and C. R. Bell. 1968. Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 1183 pp.
- Rickett, H. W. 1966. Wild Flowers of the United States. Volume 2. The Southeastern States. McGraw-Hill, New York. 688 pp.