



TREES AND PLANTS

SMALL WHORLED POGONIA

ABOUT

The Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) was unknown in West Virginia until its very recent discovery - in 1996. It is an herbaceous perennial related to the Orchid family. The plant is quite small, growing to only three centimeters (less than one and a half inches) high with a whorl (circle at the same level) of five or six leaves near the top of the stem below the flower. It reappears in spring from underground rootstock, usually just a single stem but sometimes more. The leaves and stem are grayish-green. One greenish-yellow flower (or a pair) grows out of the center of the whorl of leaves in late May to early June in West Virginia. This species rarely flowers and sometimes waits seven to eight years before flowering again.

DID YOU KNOW?

Small Whorled Pogonias grow in a variety of woodland or forest habitats. Populations in Virginia grow in mixed deciduous and conifer forests, on gently sloping terrain. They emerge from two to three inches of deciduous leaf litter and at most sites grow in the company of Large Whorled Pogonia Orchids and Indian Cucumber root plants. There are only two locations in West Virginia where this plant has been found. The greatest threat is the cutting down of forest habitats for housing developments and golf courses. Digging up the plants is a real threat too, because they do not transplant well. Since this species is small and difficult to see, it is thought there might be other populations that have not yet been discovered in West Virginia. One of West Virginia's confirmed Small Whorled Pogonia sites is on private land, and the other on federal land, both of which should survive if properly managed.

For more detailed information visit www.wvdnr.gov/wildlife/RETSpecies.asp.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What plant family is the Small Whorled Pogonia related to?

- a) Iris
- b) Cucumber
- c) Conifer
- d) Orchid

Answer is D.

