

WANTED: *Malaxis bayardii* Bayard's adder's-mouth orchid

Malaxis bayardii is a critically imperiled (G1), small-statured orchid that is very similar to the much more common and widespread *M. unifolia* (green adder's-mouth orchid). It was described as a new species in 1935 from plants found in what is now Suffolk. Shortly thereafter it was found on Reddish Knob in Augusta County, Poor Mountain in Roanoke County, and near Skippers in Greensville County. It has not been seen in Virginia since the 1940s and only a few confirmed sites remain for this species across its entire range from South Carolina to Massachusetts.

Habitat: Dry, open ridge-top woodlands and possibly shale barrens in the mountains. Dry, open mixed woods in the coastal plain. Both habitats likely experienced periodic fire that limited shrubby competition and maintained open structure. Flowers in mid to late summer.

Identification: *Malaxis bayardii* is extremely similar to *M. unifolia* but is different in two main ways. First, the basal lobes on the lip where the flower meets the pedicel are wide and long compared to *M. unifolia*, imparting an “elephant ear” attitude (Figures 1 and 3). Second, the flower pedicels are much shorter (<5mm) so the flowering racemes of *M. bayardii* look tightly cylindrical (Figure 2).

If you have questions or think you found *M. bayardii*, please contact Zach Bradford at zach.bradford@dcr.virginia.gov. Clear flower photos are essential for identification.

