ISOTRIA MEDEOLOIDES (Pursh) Raf.
Little Whorled Pogonia

FAMILY: Orchidaceae

SYNONYMS: Arethusa medeoloides Pursh; Isotria affinis (Austin) Rydberg; Odonectis affinis
(Austin) Schlechter; Pogonia affinis Austin ex A. Gray

HABIT: Herbaceous perennial, to 25 cm.; flowering mid-May to mid-June.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Vegetative plants resemble the vegetative plants of the common Indian
Cucumber-root, Medeola virginiana, a member of the Liliaceae. Flowering plants could
only be confused with the Larger Whorled Pogonia, Isotria verticillata, which differs in
having larger sepals and longer peduncles, in addition to other, more obscure,
vegetative characters. Also I. Verticillata is colonial while I. Medeoloides is not colonial.

TOTAL RANGE: Irregularly at widely scattered stations from s. ME to NC, w. to s. Ontario, MI
and MO.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are from Hocking and Scioto counties.

HABITAT: Often the habitat for this species is an open, second-growth stand of hardwoods.

HAZARDS: Maturation of habitat through succession; removal of canopy by logging activities;
destruction of habitat for development purposes.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but probably poor. This species is quite rare throughout
its range, and populations tend to consist of few individuals.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Plants should not be collected, and disturbance to populations
should be kept to a minimum. It should be noted that a Federal permit is required to
collect this species.

COMMENTS: Isotria medeoloides is considered the rarest species of North American orchid.
Populations are usually few in number, and easily may go undetected. It’s rather
generalized habitat makes this a difficult plant to seek out and successfully locate new
populations, and its small size make it easy to overlook. While rather distinctive when in
bloom, vegetative plants could easily be dismissed as the more common Isotria
verticillata, or sterile plants of Medeola virginiana, the Indian Cucumber-root. I.
medeoloides also blooms approximately two weeks later than I. verticillata.

The Scioto county record is from a single plant located in Shawnee State Forest in
1985. It is documented by photographs deposited at the University of Michigan
herbarium.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Case, Frederick W. Jr. 1987. Orchids of the Western Great Lakes Region. Cranbrook
Institute of Science, Bull. 48. 251 p.