



***The Princess of Fire
(Calopogon multiflorus)***

*Like snow white, she sleeps
until the kiss of fire
on the first days of spring
awakens her.
Only then does she come alive
and dance in her flowery pink dress.
There is no time to waste. Go, quickly,
to witness her unblemished beauty.*

Photo and poem by Donna Bollenbach

Calopogon Multiflorus, or Many-flowered Grass Pink, is a species of orchid. It requires recurring ground fires to bloom and maintain its habitat. It is found in most of the lower southeastern states, but due to its dependence on fire, it is rare in most places. This photo was taken in the spring at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park (KPPSP) in central Florida, a well-managed preserve that protects one of the last strands of Florida dry prairie. KPPSP does prescribed burns on a 2-year cycle. The *Calopogon multiflorus* blooms about 4-6 weeks after the burn, and the flowers last only a few days, so the window to see and photograph it is short. The genus *Calopogon*, means "beautiful beard" in Greek, in reference to the stamen-like bristles or beard on the lip of the flower.