

Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

Pink lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium acaule* Aiton)



The opening to the pouch of the pink lady's slipper is different than other native slipper orchids. Instead of the normal round or ovoid opening, this orchid has a cleft pouch that allows pollinators like the bumblebee to force its way into the pouch. Once inside the bee finds that the only way out is past the column that bears two stamens and the stigma.

Canoeists travelling the rivers and lakes of the Canadian Shield of eastern Manitoba in mid June, will encounter this orchid along portage trails and near their campsites. Also known as the "stemless lady's-slipper" or "moccasin flower", preferred habitats include mossy shaded slopes of granite outcroppings, dry sandy jack pine forests and occasionally, sphagnum rich black spruce and tamarack bogs. The range of this orchid extends from south eastern Manitoba along the east side of Lake Winnipeg, then across the top of the lake to the Saskatchewan boundary near Flin Flon. It has not been reported from the Interlake region.

Once a common orchid in the eastern lake country, habitat destruction and the digging of plants has reduced the population dramatically. Spade holes are often the only evidence of previous prosperous colonies. Unscrupulous dealers dig these plants and sell them to the public knowing that this is one of the most difficult orchids to successfully transplant. The pink lady's slipper may take seven years or more to reach flowering size in the wild, and usually survives a year or two at most as a transplant.