

# Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

## Ram's-head lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum* R.Brown)



In Manitoba the ram's-head lady's-slipper can be found in two very different environments with two very different growth habits. In black spruce and tamarack sphagnum bogs, the plants are often single stems, while in drier sandy locations associated with conifers, the plants are usually multi-stemmed with as many as 8 or 10 blossoms. The flower differs from other slipper orchids found in Manitoba in that the two lateral (lower) sepals are not fused. These two lateral sepals along with the conical projection from the lower, frontal portion of the pouch, gives the flower a resemblance to a ram's head complete with horns. Thus the Latin name *arietinum* meaning "of a ram".

This species ranges from the south-east, through the interlake, as far as the north end of Lake Winnipeg and across to the Saskatchewan border. Distributed widely throughout this range, it is however, considered uncommon. Clear-cut lumbering threatens this orchid in much of its range. The dimly lit habitat it prefers, along with the small size of both the plant and flower, makes this species very difficult to find. Look for it in early June before the mosquitoes and black flies become a nuisance.

One of my favourite locations for this species, a spruce grove near Little Birch Lake not far from Ashern, was destroyed by wildfires several years back. The regeneration growth of trembling aspen was so thick that the little orchid could not survive in this new environment.