

Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

Small white lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium candidum* Mulhenberg ex Willdenow)



The species name is from the Latin *candidus*, "shining white" referring to the white lip of the species.

Prior to agricultural development of the prairies of southern Manitoba, this orchid occurred in open tall grass prairies, dry mesic hillsides, low calcareous prairies and calcareous fens. Now it can only be found in prairie openings in wooded grasslands or in more open sites in calcareous sandy loam soil. Three widely separated areas of the province contain populations. South-eastern Manitoba has two distinct populations with the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve containing the largest population, while the southern Interlake district and the Brandon area have smaller populations. Plants produce either single stems or multiple stems from one rhizome, with each stem producing one flower or rarely - two blossoms. The flowers begin appearing in late May to early June, often unfolding before the leaves unwrap from about the stem. The stems typically have three or four leaves originating from the center of the stem. The small white lady's-slipper generally takes about 8 years to produce a flower from seed and large clumps have taken many years to develop.

In 1992 legislation was introduced in Manitoba that protects this species under the Manitoba Endangered Species Act, however collection of plants by amateur, commercial and scientific collectors continues to threaten all populations. Public awareness has been enhanced by the establishment of the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in south-eastern Manitoba.