

Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

Lesser rattlesnake orchid (*Goodyera repens* (Linnaeus) R.Brown)



In Manitoba, two species of the genus *Goodyera* occur. *Goodyera repens* is smaller than *Goodyera tessellata* and is more widely distributed, found from the south east in a wide band across the province to the north western border. This species is scattered throughout the Northern Hemisphere around the world.

The genus is named after a seventeenth century English botanist, John Goodyer. The species name "*repens*" is taken from Latin, meaning "creeping" which describes the habit of the horizontal rhizome or underground stem. Each rhizome terminates in a rosette of leaves. Because of this creeping rhizome, the lesser rattlesnake orchid can often form large colonies. The leaves are attractively marked with broad white veins resembling the markings of a snake. This veining is variable, with plants in the northern part of the range having indistinct markings. Preferred habitat in the south is the moist shaded areas of a black spruce and tamarck bog although further north it can be found in dry coniferous and mixed wood forests. Expect to find this species blooming from late July to early August.

In pollination, the flower initially opens only sufficiently to allow insects access to the sticky pollinia. Once the pollinia have been removed by a visiting insect, usually a long-tongued bee, the lip of the flower descends to allow the next bee to penetrate deeper and to contact the stigma.