

Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

Green adder's-mouth (*Malaxis unifolia* Michaux)



The green adder's-mouth favours a shaded environment of sphagnum hummocks in a black spruce and tamarack bog but is adaptable to other habitats that are reasonably moist.

Most often found in colonies, the plants produce a stem with a single leaf attached near the middle of the stem. The base of the leaf strongly sheaths the stem. The inflorescence is club shaped, crowded at the top where the freshest flowers and buds are found and increasingly loosely arranged towards the bottom as the flowers wither. Visually this species is best observed from the top where the "adder's-mouth" resemblance of each floret is the most prominent. Although this orchid is not uncommon, its small size and green coloured flowers blend with the environment, making it very difficult to find. I have observed this interesting species in bloom through the month of July and into early August. Herbarium collected specimens indicate a distribution within the south-eastern region of the province. However, in 1881 a single specimen of *Microstylis ophioglossoides* (a synonym of *Malaxis unifolia*) was observed by the early Canadian botanist, Macoun, in "boggy places" near Lake Winnipegosis. Confirming its occurrence in that region of the province, a friend from Swan River has a photograph of a plant in bloom taken near Cowan.

The species name is from the Latin *unus* "one" and *folium* "leaf" referring to the single leaf of the plant.