

Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

Pad-leaved orchid (*Platanthera orbiculata* (Pursh) Lindley)



The species name of this orchid is from the Latin *orbiculatus* "circular" or "round" in reference to the round shape of the leaves.

The two shiny, large round leaves lie opposite each other flattened directly against the ground. A single flower spike, 15 cm to 55 cm tall, arises from between the leaves. The stem has one or more bracts below an inflorescence comprised of up to 30 greenish-white flowers attractively encircling the upper half of the stem. This orchid creates an elegant display in the dark shadows of its environment. The white flower with a 2 cm spur, would lead to the conclusion that a night flying moth with a proboscis of sufficient length would pollinate this orchid. Stoutamire confirmed this by identifying two small gray moths as pollinators.

The range of this orchid extends from the south-east to at least Thompson in the north and west to the Saskatchewan border. In the south, its preference is for the drier, shaded areas of black spruce and tamarack bog. At the northern extremity of its range, this species can also be found in the shade of deciduous forests.

This is definitely an orchid species worth searching for. Look for it through the month of July, in the periphery of black spruce and tamarack bogs where the substrate is moist but not wet. The glistening white spike against the background of a shaded forest makes this species easy to see.