

# Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

## Northern Small yellow Lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum* var. *makasin*)



Commonly distributed throughout much of the southern two-thirds of Manitoba this orchid generally overlaps the same area as the large yellow lady's-slipper. The small yellow lady's slipper is, as the name implies, a smaller flowered version of its larger close relative. In addition to its small size, the petals and sepals of the flowers are often a very dark maroon-red shade, and the petals have a tight twist. As with the large variety, the colour of the sepals and petals of the small yellow lady's-slipper are tremendously variable and specimens in the Grand Rapids area have been observed with pale yellow sepals and petals. This slipper has a very pleasant "spicy" fragrance which can be noticeable from several feet, especially when the early morning sun begins to warm the blossoms.

The small yellow lady's-slipper has a definite tendency to form clumps and in favorable conditions may number well over 50 stems to a plant. It is not unusual for the plants to contain several stems with two blossoms. Where conditions are favorable, this orchid will readily colonize disturbed areas. In 1996 a location near the south-east end of Lake Winnipeg was found to contain hundreds of single stem blooming plants in a 5 meter by 10 meter portion of a drainage ditch. It appreciates open areas but will grow in the shade where plants are tall, single stems and have one flower per stem.

Begin looking for this orchid as early as the last week of May with the blooming season lasting until the last week of June in cool, moist environments of the north.

The popularity of this orchid has contributed to a serious decline in numbers over the years as this flower has been over-picked and moved from its natural habitat to the flower beds of many gardeners.