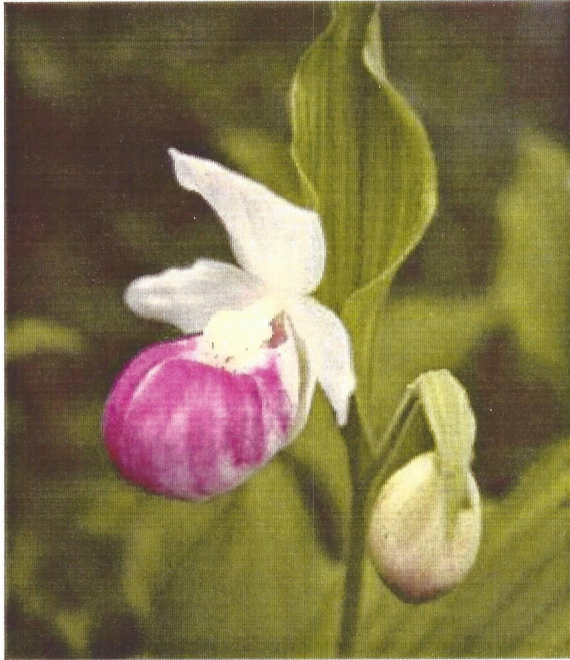


Native Orchid News:

Volume 2, Issue 1 – February, 2000

Newsletter of Native Orchid Conservation Inc.



Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

Notice of Annual General Meeting:

Wednesday, March 8, 7:30 PM

Location: Powerland Computers,

562 St. Mary's Rd

Elections to the Board will take place.

Includes slide presentation on identifying orchids throughout the year (even in the winter!): "Orchids through the Year (the Tricks of the Trade)". All are welcome to attend.

Orchid of the month: Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*)

NOCI Website: www.nativeorchid.com

For more information on NOCI,
please contact Bud Ewacha at 253-4741
or email orchid@escape.com

With the famous Manitoba 'Bonspiel Thaw' just around the corner, the excitement of spring's approach leads us to thoughts of orchids. But for those of us who thought native orchids were hard to find in the middle of the winter... please attend the Annual General Meeting on March 8 (see details above) and see the slide presentation on "***Orchids through the Year (the Tricks of the Trade)***". The next few months will see flurry of activity as Native Orchid Conservation Inc. will be providing educational displays at a number of locations and working in partnership with a variety of groups and organizations.

Upcoming display dates are as follows:

Manitoba Orchid Society: March 17,18 and 19 Assiniboine Park Conservatory

Grant Park Shopping Centre, March 26 to April 1 (inclusive)

~~Conservation week Polo Park Shopping Centre April 13,14 and 15th~~

Further dates will be published in our April newsletter and on our website.

On January 20, Bud Ewacha and Doris Ames had the pleasure of visiting Cheryl Marsh and her students at Springfield Heights Elementary School in Winnipeg. This visit was a result of our attendance at the October, 1999 S.A.G. Conference (Science Advisory Group, of the Manitoba Dept. of Education). It is a very positive experience to introduce plant conservation to children through interactive participation. We hope to continue these visits.

In response to very favourable feedback and recommendations from past participants, we are in the process of finalizing our field trips for 2000. Field trip dates and destinations will be selected and published in our April newsletter and will conveniently appear on our www.nativeorchid.com website. We are pleased to announce that Joey Olafsson will be this year's NOCI field trip coordinator. The field trips will cost \$10 each (to cover transportation) and will include day visits to a number of interesting and unique Manitoba locations.

Orchid of the Month:

SHOWY LADY'S- SLIPPER (*Cypripedium reginae*)

This queenly beauty with large, pink and white flowers is everyone's favourite orchid.

The plant is huge (2-3' tall), with hairy stems and three to four hairy leaves. It is usually found in wet areas such as swamps, bogs and fens and along country roads. Clumps containing 50 or more plants are a breath-taking sight. Some of these clumps may be 50 years old.

Blossom time is in June and July in our area, but depending on weather conditions and location, the season may extend much longer. Each plant will often have two or more flowers. The flowers appear in an endless variety of pink and white. For example, the lip or "slipper" may be pale pink with white streaks, dark pink with a single white streak, pure white, or deep red. There are also differences in shape. Blossoms will differ from one another on the same plant. There are many theories as to why this happens. It may be due to genetics, location (sunny or shady), soil type, air temperature at blossom time, virus infection or pollution. But whatever it is, it gives real meaning to the name "showy". The fat, roundish seed pods contain thousands of seeds and cling to the plant all winter, making it easy to recognize all times of the year.

Unfortunately, because this orchid is so beautiful, it is dug up more than any other. Attempts to transplant it often fail after the first few years. This practice has had a terrific impact on the numbers of these plants left in Canada, because the Showy takes 12 to 16 years to produce flowers in the wild. Lab propagation, from seed, is faster when successful, but is fraught with many difficulties. Raising them from tissue culture and selling them to the general public may prove to be the only real alternative to losing them completely. Even picking the flowers weakens the plant because it needs the leaves that are picked along with the flower, to manufacture food. We are lucky to have this slipper orchid in Manitoba. It has almost disappeared from Saskatchewan. Let us protect it while we can!

From Hobby to Conservation:

For a plant group with such beauty and such history, you would think that people would be keen to preserve the remaining wild population. But much of the trade in wild orchids and the orchid collection frenzy has centred around orchids growing in the tropics and subtropics. Orchids, with approximately 30,000 species, and over 100,000 hybrids, make up the largest flowering plants family on earth. The collection phenomenon rivals the tulip mania that swept Holland in the early 17th century. The Hybrid orchid business is alive and well for both hobby growers and nurseries as it is now relatively easy to provide the appropriate habitat for exotic orchids through the use of modern environmental control of temperature, humidity, light etc.

But where does this leave the approximately 75 native orchid species growing in Canada or the 39 native orchids growing in Manitoba? Certainly those hardy orchids growing wild in Manitoba need attention. As Doris Ames points out in her article, "The Wonder of Wild Orchids" (Manitoba Gardener, Fall 1999, or www.nativeorchid.com), all of the orchid species growing in Manitoba have come from elsewhere since the retreat of the last glacier 10,000 years ago. In other words, these species are still evolving to adapt to their 'new' circumstances. Due to our extreme climate, all orchids in Manitoba are terrestrials (growing from the ground). Orchids in the tropics can be Epiphytes (air plants), Lithophytes (growing on rocky slopes), or Terrestrials and have adapted very well to innumerable conditions. We are concerned that native orchids in our geography are in decline and we are therefore getting very active in programs, studies, and partnerships to better understand native orchid ecosystems. We don't want wild orchids such as the Showy Lady's Slipper to become exclusive to rare plant books. We want to take steps to ensure that future children and adults will be able to go out and appreciate these wonders of nature right in our back yard. Please join us in a field trip this spring or summer to witness the wild orchids of Manitoba.

You can learn more about native orchids by viewing our website at www.nativeorchid.com.

Or, send a note to orchid@escape.ca.

For information on exotics, check out www.orchidmall.com

If you are interested in attending a NOCI Board meeting (in addition to the Annual General Meeting on March 8), we meet the first Wednesday of every month at Powerland Computers, 562 St. Mary's Road, Winnipeg.