



Dragon's-mouth Orchid

The Dragon's-mouth orchid is considered rare in Manitoba, with habitat found in the south-eastern corner of the province and in the Riding Mountain area. Outside of Manitoba, its territory extends from Minnesota to the eastern seaboard, and north to Labrador.

It is regarded as elusive locally because of difficulty in accessing areas where it thrives. Favoured habitats are in beds of moss found in the open areas of coniferous bogs.

Its lone, bright mauve-coloured flower might render it mistaken for similar orchids, however it is set apart in that it lacks foliage at anthesis. The lance-shaped, ribbed leaf (up to 18 cm long) only appears after the bloom has withered.

The plant's stem grows from a sparsely rooted corm. With the flower, the Dragon's-mouth Orchid can reach a height of 30 cm.

The floral bract is 2 to 4 mm long. The ovary, at full development, can be up to 10 mm long and 4 mm wide. This orchid has three upright linear sepals (2.5 - 4 cm long and 4.5 - 8 cm wide), towering over the two similar, slightly smaller petals, which are curved over the lip, giving a hooded effect. The oblong lip of the flower (up to 3.5 cm long and 1.5 cm wide towards its tip) is pink with mauve streaking, curves downward, and has a ragged margin. The centre of the lip features a ridge of bright yellow bristles, which attract queen bumblebees - thought to be the only pollinator of this plant.

The attractive blooms are found from late-June to early July.

A significant threat to this orchid is drainage practices in areas where it is established.



Dragon's-mouth Orchid
Arethusa bulbosa
Photo by Bud Ewacha

**(C.N.P.S.) Conserve Native
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