



Small Purple Fringed Orchid

This orchid is rare to Manitoba, as the small population that exists here has been found only in the far south-eastern corner of the province. It ranges, however, from north-western Ontario to Newfoundland, and south throughout the eastern United States and into the Appalachians. Its preferred semi-acidic habitat ranges from bog forests to wet roadsides, and it does well in both shaded and fully lit areas.

The name is derived from the greek word, *psychodes*, meaning 'butterfly.'

The SPFO is the only orchid in Manitoba bearing purple flowers, although it has also been noted to bear both white and purple flowers on the same plant. Blooms are generally seen from mid-July to mid-August.

The inflorescence at the top of the plant can be up to 22 cm long and hold as many as 125 blooms, although plants found locally are much diminished. Floral bracts are 1 to 3.5 cm long. Its lip divides into 3 splayed sections, each with shallow toothed edges. The rounded nectar spur is 1.7 to 2.3 mm long. The darker sepals can be either oval or elongated, ranging in width from 2 to 3.5 mm and in length from 4 to 6.5 mm long.

Stems, including the inflorescence, can reach a height of 100 cm in locations where the SPFO is more common. Up to 10 leaves can appear on a stem, starting from oval-shaped at the bottom (10 to 15 cm long and 2 to 7 cm wide), with gradual transformation to bract-shaped at the top. The roots are succulent.



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Platanthera psychodes

Photo by Bud Ewacha

**(C.N.P.S.) Conserve Native
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Pollination of the SPFO is provided by butterflies during the daytime and by moths at night.

To preserve its delicate future in our province, the SPFO is best served by not picking or transplanting this endangered species. It does not transplant well, in any event.

The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid Project

Spring is still far away, but will hopefully bring signs of successful proliferation of the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid. The CNPS project, which has already commenced, involves seed pollination, collection, and reseeded back into the wild, and has received backing from Nature Conservancy of Canada and Berger Brothers Ltd. Look for updates in future newsletters.



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