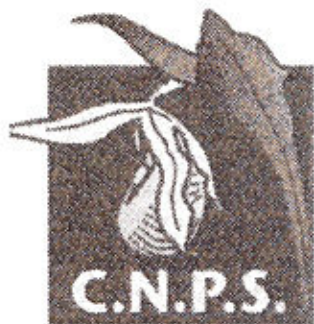


## Cypripedium acaule (Mocassin Flower)



**Conserve Native Plants Society Inc.**

**C**ommon name: Mocassin Flower

**A**bundance: Relatively common.

**H**abitat: Present in a wide variety of northern forest habitats, from dry sandy pine forests to the wettest coniferous bogs/swamps. The only obvious requirements are shade and an acidic, nutrient-poor substrate.

**F**lowering time: May 24-July 10

**D**escription: Stem (peduncle) 14-44 cm long, glandular-pubescent; arising from a coarse, knotty rhizome; roots long and cord-like; leaves two, basal, elliptical to obovate, 9-23 cm long, 2.5-9.0 cm wide; inflorescence a single nodding flower; floral bract lanceolate, green, 2.3-4.5 cm long, 3.5-11.0 mm wide near the base; ovary 1.0-1.5 cm long, 4.0-6.0 mm wide at anthesis; sepals elliptical to lance-elliptical, yellow green to brown or purple, 2.5-4.0 cm long, 0.9-1.6 cm wide, the two lateral sepals fused to form a single sepal located ventrally (directly below the lip); petals lanceolate to lance-linear, acuminate, similar in color to the sepals, 2.8-4.5 cm long, 5.0-9.0 mm wide, lip an inflated pouch, pink to purple, obovate, 3.3-6.0 cm long, the opening concealed in a deep longitudinal fissure on the dorsal surface.

**A**id to identification: This is the only lady's-slipper with two basal leaves; the others have three or more alternate leaves that are scattered over most of the stem. The deep longitudinal crease on the top of the pouch is also unique to this species.

The term "stemless", as used in the common name "stemless lady's-slipper", is confusing to many people. What may appear to be a stem is actually a



*C. acaule*; photographed by Bud Ewacha

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peduncle or scape. The true stem is a short underground structure that is usually not visible.

In the normal developmental process, the unexpanded pouch of all young flowers of *C. acaule* first appears white, but becomes pink with maturity. A true albino form does exist in which the pouch remains pure white, and the petals and sepals are yellowish green. This form (f. *albiflora*) is quite rare in Minnesota, but could be found singly or as scattered individuals in any colony of normal-colored plants.

**C**omments: According to Curtis (1943), the seeds may remain dormant for several years before conditions are favorable for germination. Following germination the young plant (corm) undergoes a remarkable developmental period entirely underground, nourished by a symbiotic (possibly parasitic) relationship with a specialized fungus, mycorrhiza. During the third and fourth year after germination the plant may send up its first green leaf, and sometime after the eighth year it will produce its first flower. It is not known how long individuals can live, but it is likely that they can survive for decades if their habitat is not disturbed. *C. acaule* is known to be pollinated by bumblebees.

**T**his flower is having serious problems in Manitoba as a fungus is killing this plant. We have a grant from Model Forest to spray the plants in an attempt to destroy the fungus; but these were received late in the season and results are inconclusive.

## Manitoba Conservation Grant

A grant from Manitoba Conservation has permitted our group to work with Southeast Timber Sales (Manitoba Conservation) to locate areas in rural Manitoba with endangered plants for the purpose of setting these aside and protecting them from cutting and other disturbances to habitat.

We now have identified a variety of wild plants in 15 rural areas to be protected and a report has been submitted to the province. Areas have been identified in the regions of Sprague, Woodridge, Richer and Belair.

Gull Lake Wetlands were set aside as an ecological reserve this year; Bud Ewacha started working on saving this area 10 years ago.

We also had a grant from Nature Conservancy to work with and research the Western Prairie Fringe but due to wet weather conditions, no work was done. This grant will be carried over to next year. Unfortunately, the Western Fringe has failed to produce seed pods for two years in a row.