



# Western Wood Lily

**O**ther names: Cree: wapayoominusk, wakican, wakiychan; English: tiger lily.

**S**cientific name: *Lilium philadelphicum* L.

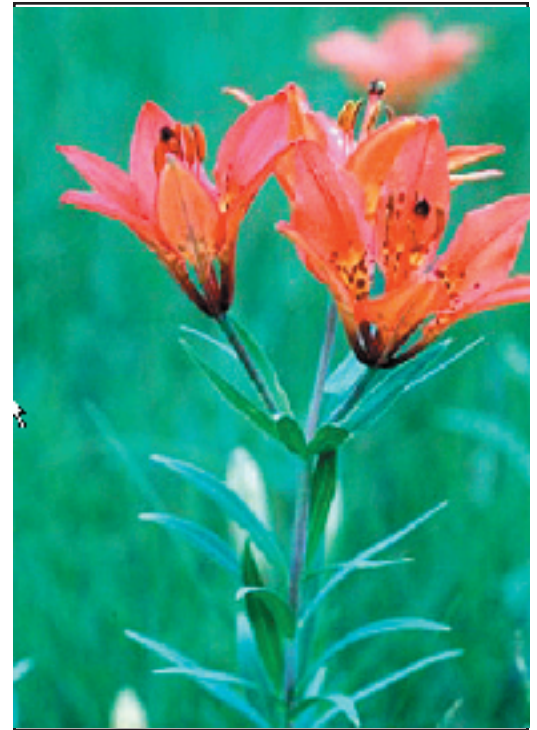
**D**escription: A herb growing from a thick-scaled white bulb, with a stem up to 80 cm tall producing narrow leaves alternately on the lower stem and then in one or two whorls on the upper stem, and one to five large showy flowers with three sepals and three petals similarly narrow at their base, 5-6 cm long, and red, yellow or orange-red with purplish black spots on the inner lower surface.

**H**abitat: Found in moist meadows, open woodlands, and prairies from eastern British Columbia to western Quebec, and in central and eastern USA, but becoming scarcer with settlement and overpicking.

**F**ood uses: Attached to the roots are numerous tubers only a little larger than a grain of rice, which can be eaten fresh or dried.

**M**edicinal uses: The root can be part of a compound medicine for treating heart problems. A dried tuber can be placed in a tooth cavity and then crushed to relieve the toothache. To treat appendicitis the tubers can be boiled and the resulting soup eaten.

**P**roperties: Although no information could be found regarding western wood lily, the food value of the ricelike bulbs of riceroot lily (*Fritillaria camschatcensis* (L.) Ker Bawl) per 100 g fresh weight (74% moisture) is as follows: food energy (98 kcal), protein (2.9 g), fat (0.3 g), total carbohydrate (21.8 g), crude fiber (1.9 g), thiamine (0.04 mg), riboflavin (0.04), niacin (0.2 mg), vitamin C (29 mg), and minerals (ash: 1.0 g), including Ca (10 mg), P (61 mg), Na (18 mg), Mg



*Western Wood Lily, Lilium philadelphicum*

(23 mg), Cu (0.2 mg), Zn (0.7 mg), Fe (2.2 mg), and Mn (0.4 mg). No scientific information is available on the medicinal properties of this lily.

**P**otential: It seems wasteful to eat the roots of this beautiful flower, which is Saskatchewan's provincial floral emblem.

## C.N.P.S. Displays

Grant Park April 7 to 10

St. Vital Shopping Centre Apr. 28 to May 1

## Annual General Meeting

**Wed. April 13 at 7:30 p.m.**

Dakota Lawn Bowling Club

1212 Dakota

Guest speaker: Jim Duncan, Manager  
of the Biodiversity Conservation  
Section of the MB Provincial  
Government

## Western Prairie Fringed Orchid Struggles for Survival

One of our province's natural treasures had been long going unnoticed by native plant enthusiasts until quite recently. Even though it has been established in south-eastern Manitoba for some time, it was only in 1984 that the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Plantanthera praeclara* Sheviak & Bowles) was officially discovered by Dr. Paul Catling. Dr. Catling, an orchid specialist and taxonomist from Agriculture Canada, is also responsible for first recording the Small Purple Fringed Orchid (*Plantanthera psycodes* [L.] Lindsay) for Manitoba at the same date in July of 1984.

The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid is related to the Prairie White Fringed Orchid, which appears in southern Ontario and across the northern states of America. A distinction was made from the Prairie White Fringed Orchid, later to be identified as the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid, because of variations in flower composition. This species in Manitoba is very rare.

It is possible to find in early summer thousands of plants, each bearing 6 to 25 large creamy-white blossoms. The flowers are 1.5 to 3 cm in width and height, and feature a three-parted, shallow fringed lip. Its 3 - 5 cm nectar spur is the longest of any north-temperate orchid. The preferred habitat of these orchids are the wet fields and roadsides of southwestern Manitoba.

The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid reproduces almost entirely by seed, with pollination facilitated by moths and other insects whose long palps permit access to the nectar held in the spur. The powerful scent of this orchid is the attraction to these insects during their nocturnal search for food.

A requirement for propagation of this plant is contact between the minute seeds and a certain soil-dwelling mycorrhiza, common to the wet calcium-high soils found in few areas of Manitoba. Furthermore, seedlings can take several years before their first true leaves push up through the soil.

An issue of immediate concern is that, in this province, 2004 was a particularly bad year for seed production for a number of local native plants including the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid. Cool wet weather is

believed to be the negative factor affecting the plant's ability to produce seed pods.

The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid thrives in only a small, select area of Manitoba and Canada, and accordingly is listed as endangered, both provincially and federally in Canada, and as threatened in the U.S. It favours habitat that was formally wet Tall Grass Prairie, and is seriously at risk by expanding agricultural encroachment.

There has been some intervention to protect the delicate environment of the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid by organizations such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the provincial government. Some of their measures include the purchase of land containing this unique habitat, and the creation of the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. However, there still exists the threat of conversion of much of this land to agricultural use by private landowners. The onus is on us, as concerned individuals, to support the work of these environmental groups and to stress our value of this natural heritage to the governing bodies who have the authority to change policies for the better.

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*This article, written by Bud Ewacha, was printed by the Carillon News in Steinbach on Feb. 17, 2005.*

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### **(C.N.P.S.) Conserve Native Plants Society Inc.**

**[www.conservenativeplants.ca](http://www.conservenativeplants.ca)**

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