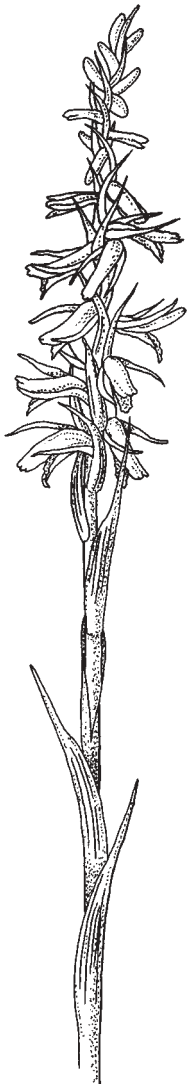


Manitoba's Species At Risk

Endangered



Any native Manitoba species threatened to disappear through all or most of its Manitoba range. Endangered species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.



Great Plains ladies'-tresses

Spiranthes magnicamporum

Great Plains ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes magnicamporum*) is a provincially Endangered orchid, found in Manitoba, Ontario and more than 20 American states. Plants can grow to a height of 12 to 38 cm (4.5 to 15 inches). Leaves are basal, 1.2 cm (0.5 inches) wide and up to 14 cm (5.5 inches) long. Flowers are arranged in a spike, 2.5 to 10 cm (1 to 4 inches) long, with 13 to 48 creamy white flowers spiralling up the stem in two or more vertical columns. Each flower is about 1.5 cm (0.6 inches) long with a fleshy lower lip that is yellowish in the centre. The flowers are heavily scented, with an aroma similar to vanilla or freshly mown hay.

In Manitoba, Great Plains ladies'-tresses may be confused with Hooded ladies'-tresses, and close inspection of the flowers is needed to tell them apart. Hooded ladies'-tresses flowers have a fiddle-shaped lower lip, and a hood-shaped structure formed by the sepals on the top. Great Plains ladies'-tresses flowers have a more oval-shaped lip and do not have a distinct hood. In most cases Great Plains ladies'-tresses begins to flower after Hooded ladies'-tresses has finished blooming.

Habitat

Great Plains ladies'-tresses grow in calcareous (calcium-rich or alkaline) prairies or wet meadows, along with grasses, sedges and shrubs. Occasionally, plants are found in moist roadside ditches.

Life History

Great Plains ladies'-tresses is a perennial, surviving from one year to the next as a large fleshy root. Leaves are present for much of the summer, but wither and disappear about two weeks before flowering in mid-

September. Bumblebees have been observed pollinating ladies'-tresses, but other insects may also serve as pollinators. Fruits are small capsules bearing many tiny seeds.

Like several other species of orchids, Great Plains ladies'-tresses shows large and unexplained fluctuations in numbers from year to year. At the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, the largest number of flowering plants observed was nearly 3,000, up from fewer than 800 flowering plants the previous year.

Distribution

Great Plains ladies'-tresses occurs in Manitoba and southern Ontario, south to Texas, west to Utah and east to Virginia.

Manitoba's populations of Great Plains ladies'-tresses are found in the Gardenton-Vita area, including the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, the Gardenton Community Pasture and surroundings.

Status

Great Plains ladies'-tresses is considered provincially very rare (S1) by the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre. It is considered rare throughout much of the eastern part of its range, especially in the southeastern United States, but is quite common in other portions of its range. It is considered secure (G4) globally by NatureServe. Threats to the species include encroachment of woody species, illegal collection of plants, spraying of herbicides, clearing of ditches, and weedy species invasion.

Great Plains ladies'-tresses was listed as Endangered in 1998 by regulation under



Manitoba's Species At Risk

Cool Facts

Manitoba's populations of Great Plains ladies'-tresses are the most northern sites for the species in North America. Many biologists believe populations of species found at the edge of their range may have unique features allowing them to survive in the harsher environmental conditions.

Great Plains ladies'-tresses can be difficult to spot in tall prairie grasses because of their small size. Their strong scent helps to attract insect pollinators, and often reveals their presence before they can be seen.

Like all orchids, Great Plains ladies'-tresses grows with the assistance of mycorrhizae, soil fungi that assist the plants in taking up soil nutrients. Moving plants from their native habitat is generally not successful because of their very specific habitat and soil requirements.

Great Plains ladies'-tresses was not recognized as being distinct from Nodding ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes cernuum*) until 1973. Nodding ladies'-tresses has been reported but not confirmed in Manitoba. In other areas the two species can often be found growing in the same locations. Nodding ladies'-tresses retains its leaves at flowering time, distinguishing it from Great Plains ladies'-tresses.



Manitoba's *Endangered Species Act*. It is relatively common in southern Ontario, and therefore not considered at risk in Canada.

Stewardship and recovery

A key component of recovery efforts is the protection of critical habitat for the species. The Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve protects over 2,100 hectares (5,200 acres) of habitat for native prairie species, including Great Plains ladies'-tresses.

Populations of Great Plains ladies'-tresses on the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve and adjacent roadside ditches are monitored regularly by preserve staff. Several new locations for the orchid have been discovered in the Gardenton area since surveys began in 1994.

Get involved in recovery

If you have Great Plains ladies'-tresses on your property, congratulations! Your land management skills have helped maintain important habitat for one of Manitoba's rarest plants. You can help maintain it by preserving the native species found in its habitat and by avoiding herbicide spraying at sensitive times. Please contact Manitoba Conservation at one of the numbers below if you would like more information on what you can do to further enhance your land for this and other native Manitoba plant and animal species.

Manitoba Conservation
Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch
Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Crescent
Winnipeg MB
R3J 3W3
(204) 945-7775
www.gov.mb.ca/natres/wildlife/index.htm

Manitoba Conservation Regional Offices

Eastern Region
Lac du Bonnet
(204) 345-1427

Red River Region
Winnipeg
(204) 948-3262

Partners in production of this fact sheet:
Manitoba Conservation,
Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch
Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service
Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation

Extirpated Species

Any species once native to Manitoba that has disappeared through all of its Manitoba range. Extirpated species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Endangered Species

Any native Manitoba species threatened to disappear through all or most of its Manitoba range. Endangered species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Threatened Species

Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Vulnerable Species

Species not regulated under the *Endangered Species Act* but which could eventually be considered Endangered or Threatened if the factors affecting them do not improve.