

Manitoba Native Orchids Compendium

Great Plains Ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes magnicamporum* Sheviak)



This orchid blooms from late August through September and the earliest blooming plants may be confused with late blooming plants of the hooded ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes romanoffiana*). The noticeable fragrance and the lack of basal leaves, reliable about 90 % of the time, should be of assistance in identifying the Great Plains ladies'-tresses.

There are no published reports of pollinators of this species. On August 26, 2001 the author observed a large bumblebee visiting flowers in a colony of over 150 plants at a roadside ditch in the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve near Gardenton. After visiting a number of plants the bumblebee stopped and attempted to remove pollinia attached to its proboscis by a scratching motion with its' front legs. It engaged in this process so vigorously that it fell to the ground.

Last orchid to bloom in Manitoba, this species has been recorded only from the Tolstoi - Gardenton - Vita area in the south-east. Preferring meadows of tall grass prairie, it also colonizes disturbed areas like road side ditches and abandoned fields. Highly fragrant, the plants can often be detected by their fragrance prior to being observed in the mature blue-stem grass stands of the tall grass prairie. Looking directly down on the inflorescence demonstrates the spiral arrangement of the florets accounting for the Genus name *Spiranthes*.