



## **Pink Lady's Slipper**

### **Cypripède rose**

### **Nipissing Ojibway: makinsinwaabigwaan**

The Pink Lady's Slipper with its large showy flower was chosen as a symbol for the Friends of Laurier Woods. They bloom in June each year. This is a common orchid that grows in the Woods.

Like other orchids, the Pink Lady's Slipper is an incomplete plant when it germinates. At that stage it has a rudimentary root system. The little plantlet must form a co-operative relationship with specific fungi of the genus *Rhizoctonia* to survive and keep growing. The soil fungus helps the Pink Lady's Slipper obtain water and soil nutrients while the fungus obtains carbohydrates from the plant. The new seedling takes over 10 years to start flowering. This is why you cannot find Pink Lady's Slippers to buy at a garden centre. If you do see the Pink Lady's Slipper at a garden centre, ask where they were sourced. Please do not buy Pink Lady's Slippers that were removed from the wild and not under any circumstances dig them up or pick them from Laurier Woods C.A.

With such a tenuous reproductive life cycle we are lucky that Pink Lady's Slipper can also reproduce vegetatively via underground roots called rhizomes. If you see a patch of Pink Lady's Slippers these probably formed through the underground roots of a parent plant. The patch could be decades old.

You will notice metal pins near some of the Pink Lady Slippers in LWCA. These metal pins were installed by researchers at Nipissing University who collect data annually. Some initial results suggest that the colour of the Pink Lady's Slipper is darker when growing in more open conditions such as boggy areas and is more faded in hardwood dominated sites. Lab experiments show that the Pink Lady's Slipper requires soil conditions that are acidic (i.e. a pH of 5). Boggy conditions have acidic soils and a lot of light, these may be ideal growing conditions for the Pink Lady's Slipper.

When the plant flowers it is pollinated by bees looking for nectar, but the Pink Lady's Slipper does not produce very much nectar. Once in the slipper shaped flower the bee finds it difficult to exit as it is forced to move in a specific direction by hairs within the flower. The hairs move the bee to come in contact with the stigma where some of the pollen picked up by the bee at other flowers can be deposited help fertilize the tiny ovules that form tiny seeds.