

## Wild Lady Slipper Orchid

This wild Lady Slipper Orchid grows on our farm.

The Lady Slipper is the Minnesota State Flower.

It is a very long-lived plant.

Its life cycle and life span are not well understood.

Some texts claim Lady Slippers live for more than 100 years.

I believe that is true.

This particular plant is at least 60 years old.

I discovered it more than 30 years ago.



If nurtured, it consistently produced 15 to 22 wonderfully beautiful blossoms each summer.

It blooms for seven to ten days starting near the end of June.

I was searching for a Lady Slipper in our 80 acres of low woodland at the time.

For some reason, Gail decided there was a Lady Slipper on the farm and asked me to find it.

I searched for many hours over a two-week period when I thought a Lady Slipper might be blooming.

The plant would be impossible to locate in all the greenery without blossoms.

I searched mostly on horseback. Sojourner.

On horseback I would be high enough to see the blossoms in the tall grass and forbs.

I rode Sojourner.

He was the horse most tolerant of walking in the lowland.

Horses generally are unwilling to struggle through swampy ground.

Orchids are an ancient plant species.

They do not grow from seeds.

They originate from spores and have a complicated and delicate life process.

Lady Slippers are very difficult to domesticate.

Few gardeners have the time, patience, or knowledge to raise them.  
State law has protected wild Lady Slippers like this one since the early 1900s.  
Orchids need a rich and moist soil.  
They tend to grow in the cool wet, swampy areas of northern Minnesota, where they are common, but rarely abundant.  
Few grow in our part of central Minnesota.  
The Department of Natural Resources map shows them along the Minnesota River valley and several other southern areas.  
Although there must certainly be others in our Sherburne County, none are indicated on DNR maps.  
We do what we can to protect it.  
Tom.



**Granddaughter Ella, examining our Lady Slipper**