



Common name • Western Prairie-fringed Orchid
Scientific name • *Platanthera praeclara*
Federal status • Threatened
State status • Endangered

Ecology

The western prairie-fringed orchid is a stout, erect plant standing one to four feet tall and occurs in rich, deep-soil upland prairies of Missouri. This perennial orchid blooms from mid-June to early July and bears seed in August. The flowers are fragrant at night to attract moths, which are the only known pollinators. Following drought years these orchids may remain dormant in the soil. The western prairie fringed orchid was known to have been distributed throughout the western portions of the state in mesic areas of upland prairies, and in bottomland prairies. Currently it is known only in Atchison, Holt and Harrison counties.

Reasons for Decline

Decline of the western prairie fringed orchid is directly linked to the conversion of prairies to cropland and exotic grass pastures. Currently, the western prairie fringed orchid's habitat continues to be lost to agricultural practices that diminish or destroy high-quality, diverse native prairies.

Specific Recommendations

- Survey high-quality prairies in western and northern Missouri during flowering period to determine if the orchid is present.
- At known or expected sites: avoid herbicide use during growing season unless spot spraying is used on target species.
- Do not mow during the orchid's growing season.
- Maintain or promote hydrologic conditions fostering prairie swales and bottomland prairies.
- Avoid any pesticide use at prairie sites that might affect the species' pollinators.

Information Contacts

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Disclaimer

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