

YELLOW FRINGED ORCHID

Platanthera ciliaris (L.) Lindl.

Plant Symbol = PLCI2

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Alternate names

Orange-plume, orange-fringe, bobwhite's moccasin, owl's head. This plant is referred to as *Blephariglotis ciliaris* (L.) Rydb. or *Habenaria ciliaris* (L.) R. Br. ex Ait., in much of the older literature.

Uses

Ethnobotanic: The Cherokee and Seminoles as well as other Native American tribes in the Eastern United States used the yellow-fringed orchid for medicinal and other purposes. The roots were used to make infusions to treat diarrhea. The roots were also used to treat snakebites. A cold infusion of the root was taken to relieve headaches. A piece of the root was

used on fishhooks to "make the fish bite better." In Florida, it was known as "rattle snake's master" and was used both internally and externally to treat snakebite.

Status

This plant may be listed as threatened in your state. This rare plant is threatened by loss of habitat, harvesting, and changes in land management practices, such as fire suppression, in much of its native range. It is listed as threatened by many states and is probably locally extinct in Canada. It is also listed in Appendix II of the CITES database of threatened plants. Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

General: Orchid Family (Orchidaceae). This plant is a native, perennial herb. The upright stems will grow 30 cm to 1m tall. The roots are tuberous or fleshy. The plant has numerous lance-shaped leaves. The lower leaves are about 30 cm long, 3 to 6 cm wide, with smaller leaves toward the top. The plants have showy spikes (5 to 20 cm long) of loosely clustered flowers. The flowers grow in racemes, opening from bottom to top. The flowers can be bright yellow through apricot to deep orange. The lower petal or lip of the flower is linear-oblong (8 to 12 mm long, 2-3 mm wide) with long ciliated fringe (12 to 16 mm long). The spurs are 20 to 33 mm long. Blooming time is variable, but usually from late June in the North to late September in the South.

Distribution: For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Habitat: The plants are native to sphagnum and sedge bogs, swamps, marshes, wet sandy barrens, thickets on borders of streams and ponds, moist woods, wet meadows, prairies, and in deep humus of upland forests in the Eastern United States and Canada.

Establishment

Yellow-fringed orchids are attractive and easier to grow than most fringed orchids. They do well in either partial shade or full sun. The plants grow in slightly acid soils with a pH from 5 to 6.

Pests and Potential Problems

The plants need to be protected from slugs, snails, and cutworms.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

These plant materials are not readily available from commercial sources. However, there are specialty growers who are propagating this plant. Do not harvest these plants from the wild as they are threatened throughout most of their range.

Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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