



Maine Department of Conservation  
Natural Areas Program

*Cypripedium arietinum* Ait. f.

**Ram's-head Lady's-slipper**

**Habitat:** Damp or mossy woods or bogs. [Conifer forest (forest, upland); Forested wetland; Hardwood to mixed forest (forest, upland)]

**Range:** Southeastern Canada south to New England and west to Minnesota.

**Phenology:** Flowers in late May to early June.

**Family:** Orchidaceae

**Aids to Identification:** *Cypripedium arietinum* is the smallest and rarest lady slipper growing in Maine. Ram's-head lady's-slipper is unique from other lady's slippers by having three separate sepals rather than two. A single flower tops the leafy stalk. The lower lip is whitish strongly veined with red, and is reduced downward to a blunt conical pouch; viewed from the side this resembles a ram's head.

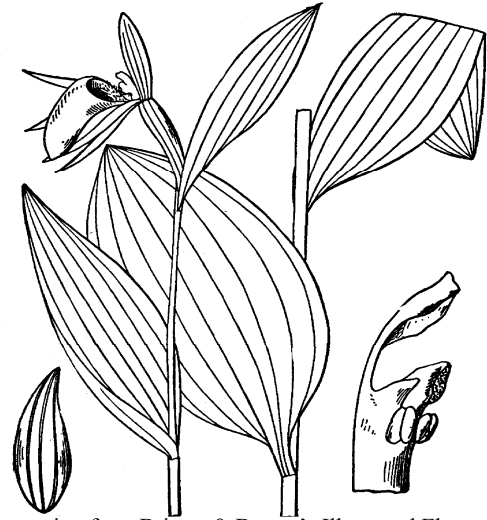


Illustration from Britton & Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, 2nd ed.

**Ecological characteristics:** Ram's-head lady's-slippers are found very locally in mixed woods or open stands of northern white cedar, growing in moist, sandy or loose soil sites in well drained situations in partial shade, at relatively low elevations. It can be found with various native plants in different locations including star flower (*Trientalis borealis*), twin-flower (*Linnaea borealis*), bellwort (*Uvularia sessilifolia*), bunch-berry (*Cornus canadensis*), ferns, and occasionally in cedar bogs with pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*) and various shrubby heaths.

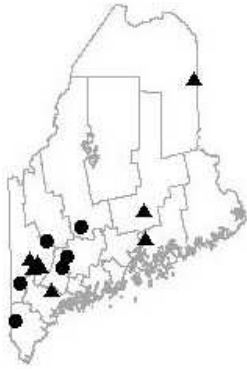
**Synonyms:**

**Rarity of *Cypripedium arietinum***

<b>State Rank:</b>	S1	Critically imperiled in Maine because of extreme rarity or vulnerability to extirpation.
<b>New England Rank:</b>	Division 1	Globally rare plant occurring in New England: Only a few occurrences exist within New England.
<b>Global Rank:</b>	G3	Rare or uncommon globally.

**Status of *Cypripedium arietinum***

<b>Federal Status:</b>	None	No Federal Status.
<b>State Status:</b>	Endangered	Rare and in danger of being lost from the state in the foreseeable future; or federally listed as Endangered. Listing criteria met: Few individuals, Declining populations, Vulnerable to human activity



- ▲ Historical (before 1982)  
● Recent (1982 - present)

### Known Distribution in Maine:

This rare plant has been documented from a total of 15 town(s) in the following county(ies): Androscoggin, Aroostook, Cumberland, Hancock, Kennebec, Oxford, Penobscot, Somerset, York.

**Dates of documented observations are:** 1873, 1886, 1896, 1904, 1935, 1945, 1952, 1962, 1976, 1993 (2), 1995, 1998 (2), 1999, 2000, 2002

### Reason(s) for rarity:

Rare and declining throughout its range perhaps due to loss of habitat through succession, development, or in some cases indiscriminate timbering. Occurs (and is rare) in all New England states except Rhode Island.

### Conservation considerations:

Orchids are popular among some speciality gardeners, and populations of this species are vulnerable to unscrupulous or uneducated collectors. Plants dug from the wild usually do not survive; more importantly, removing these plants harms the natural population and may cause its eventual disappearance. This plant is not known to have been successfully propagated, and any plants offered for sale have almost certainly been collected from the wild. Effects of logging are not well known, but partial removal of the canopy may be beneficial as long as subsequent undergrowth is not allowed to overgrow the plants.

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Plant rarity and status is based on 2008 data and the rest of the information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 12 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species, please contact the Natural Areas Program  
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.

