

Text for Presentation: “Cypripedium Orchids”

Slide 1 (Title Page)

The original presentation was entitled “Cypripedium calceolus”, the yellow lady slipper orchid of Europe and Asia. With the material that I had, the presentation would have been too brief. I will instead present information about the Cypripedium genus, dealing with the calceolus species plus other lady slipper orchids and finishing with other orchids found on North American stamps.

Slide 2 (read)

Slide 3 (Diagram)

We will closely pay attention to the 2 lateral petals, both the top dorsal and bottom fused sepals and the shape of the “slipper”, labeled on the diagram as the labellum or 3rd petal.

Slide 4 (image of C. calceolus)

Note that the lateral petals AND both sepals are a rich brown-violet color. The labellum is ovoid (egg-shaped), its outer surface completely yellow. We will now examine artists’ representations of this orchid, noting which ones choose to show the orchid accurately and those which alter it (artistic license or expression).

Slide 5 (Great Britain 1786, 2662)

Both are accurate representations.

Slide 6 (Romania 3465i, 4015)

The 1967 stamp was enhanced. The artist chose to show striated (striped) petals and sepals. Also the labellum is club-shaped with green indentations. The 1995 stamp has a more accurate slipper, but the petals and sepals are orange-brown and striated.

Slide 7 (Denmark 923)

This used Danish stamp shows a rather accurate representation, including the red dots on the inner surface of the slipper.

Slide 8 (Grenadines of St. Vincent)

The Old World lady slipper depicted on the stamp from the island nation in the West Indies is not found there. St. Vincent Grenadines is one of the stamp issuing entities that cater to collectors. The well-known artist,

Jennifer Toombes, chose to depict a composite. While the slipper looks good and the color of the petals and sepals are a brownish-violet, the bottom sepal is split. This usually only occurs on a mature (old) flower, which would have faded to a pale yellowish-white coloration and not a bright yellow as depicted on the stamp.

Slide 9 (Hungary 3087)

This artist is depicting the slipper as globose, as rather roundish shape.

Slide 10 (Latvia & Lithuania)

Since these two countries are geographically adjacent to each other, I chose the stamps side by side. The slipper on the Latvian stamp is a flattened club. The indentations on the slipper of the Lithuanian stamp are highlighted by a red coloration. Artistic license?

Slide 11 (Slovakia & Slovenia)

The Slovenian stamp looks good. The artist of the Slovakian stamp “enhanced” the slipper.

Slide 12 (Norway & Sweden)

Both look nice, although the Norway stamp depicts a split lower sepal. The Swedish stamp also depicts the root system and flower parts.

Slide 13 (Mongolia & Russia)

Mongolia: The artist outlined the inner rim of the slipper in green to match the background, plus the petals are red-brown.

Russia: The artist enhanced the slipper with a red inner rim and red indentations on the outer surface.

Slide 14 (U.N. – Vienna 196)

This is a strikingly pleasing stamp, including the depiction of red dots on the staminoide, except note the red outlined slipper.

Slide 15 (Malagasy & Uganda)

Yikes! Two African countries. Need I say more? Brown coloration of petals & sepals on the Uganda stamp. Pinkish-purple petals & sepals plus a globose slipper on the Malagasy stamp.

That finishes our review of artists’ conceptions of the Old World lady slipper, *Cypripedium calceolus*. We will now examine the North American yellow lady slippers.

Slide 16 (Cypripedium parviflorum & pubescens)

While the parviflorum is also known as the lesser (small) yellow lady slipper and the pubescens species as the greater (large) yellow lady slipper, the size of the slipper is not the determining factor. The small yellow lady slipper can be larger than its “cousin”. Note the 2 solid brownish-purple lateral petals on the parviflorum species. They have 5 tight twists. The pubescent species, as the scientific names suggests, has downy (hoary) leaves and stems. Even the petals and sepals are slightly downy. Moreover, the petals are striated. These orchids grow in a variety of habitats from shady, damp forest understory of mixed deciduous and coniferous to open meadows and along streams in acidic soils.

Slide 17 (Cypripedium planipetalum)

There is a third, albeit uncommon North American yellow lady slipper. As the scientific name states: plain petaled. This orchid, with a common name of flat-petaled yellow lady slipper has solid yellow-green flat petals. It has a very limited geographical range, namely along the Canadian coasts of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron.

Slide 18 (Canada 1790 & U.S. 2077)

The Canadian stamp depicts the lesser yellow lady slipper. The U.S. stamp = ? Labeled as calceolus. This is understandable, as in 1984 when this stamp was issued, the North American lady slippers were known as subspecies of Cypripedium calceolus. It looks like the artist was attempting to illustrate the greater yellow lady slipper.

This finishes the presentation on yellow lady slippers. Other species of lady slippers will next be shown.

Slide 19 (image of C. acaule)

The image of this orchid was taken in adjacent Genesee County. Common names are pink lady slipper and Mocassin Flower. It is found throughout northern North America and is commonly located beneath hemlock trees on rocky/mossy slopes or in deep humus and acidic, but well-drained soil under birch.

Slide 20 (Canada 424 and St. Pierre & Miquelan 360)

Two examples of artists’ depictions of the pink lady slipper.

Slide 21 (C. reginae)

This is the queen’s or showy lady slipper. It is the largest of the North American lady slippers. This orchid is found in rich well-drained alkaline soil and in sphagnum bogs. The image was taken on the Bruce Peninsula in Ontario Province. It can also be found nearby in Wayne County. Note the showy pink and white slipper plus the pure white petals and sepals.

Slide 22 (*C. passerinum*)

This image of the sparrow's egg lady slipper was taken by Dr. Carl Linhart in a roadless Canadian national park on the northern shore of Lake Superior, which is its eastern-most range of a boreal and sub-arctic region of Canada and Alaska. It grows in spruce forests, as well as bogs and tundra. It is uncommon --- an orchid that I personally have never seen. Note the narrow lateral petals. The artist chose to depict them as swept back, but the illustration on the stamp is an excellent representation of this tiny orchid.

Slide 23 (*C. candidum*)

New York's tiny white orchid is *Cypridium candidum* or small white lady slipper. It's only currently known location in the state is Genesee County's Bergen Swamp. This orchid is also found in the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie in Illinois. For the past 40 years, I have seen this orchid bloom on the third Saturday of May. At this time each year, the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society leads both the morning and afternoon pilgrimages (guided nature walks) to view this rare orchid. Participants come from near and far. If you would like to participate, contact the Society to make a reservation.

Slide 24 (*C. formosanum*)

I had the privilege to view this strikingly beautiful lady slipper as I was walking through the woods along a cliff side path in Yunnan Province. Note the equally fine rendition on the Taiwan stamp.

Slide 25 (*C. japonicum*)

The remainder of the lady slippers that we will view will be artist's representations, as I haven't been in any of the locations. The orchid on Japan Z165 is Japan's yellow lady slipper.

Slide 26 (*C. guttatum*)

The spotted lady slipper is well illustrated on the Mongolian stamp (note the red spots on the lateral petals), while the artist for the Malagasy stamp chose to put the spots on the orange-brown slipper. Though labeled as the *guttatum* species, I consider this illustration a phantom. As a circumpolar species, the spotted lady slipper also occurs in Alaska, Yukon and the Northwest Territories, where the slipper is a magenta-pink, its underside spotted with white. The Mongolian stamp is a cropped image of a souvenir sheet, which will be seen on the next slide.

Slide 27 (Souvenir Sheet Mongolia 2279)

A group of spotted lady-slippers showing their foliage and tall erect form.

Slide 28 (C. macranthum)

While North America's pink lady slipper is a deeper reddish-violet hue than pink, one of the common names for the macranthum species is red lady slipper. It is abundantly found on Mongolia's grassland plateaus. In this case, the Malagasy stamp does depict a similar likeness. Again, the Mongolian stamp is a cropped image from a souvenir sheet as viewed on the next slide.

Slide 29 (Mongolia 2278)

A view of a group of red lady slippers.

This concludes the presentation of the wild lady slippers found on stamps.

To finish this presentation, I will now show some other orchids found on North American stamps.

Slide 30 (Arethusa)

While the stamp identifies the orchid as a wild pink, the accepted common name is dragon's mouth orchid. Most often it is known simply as Arethusa. The image was taken 20 years ago in a swamp in Genesee County. This orchid expends much energy to bloom and after the short flowering period, the bulb stays dormant for many years (a decade plus) before it has stored enough energy to reappear. One hopes that the site has other Arethusa orchids on a different cycle. I have only seen this orchid a few times in my lifetime --- once again in Genesee County, in Hiawatha National Forest on upper Michigan's peninsula and in Cape Breton Highlands in Nova Scotia Province.

Slide 31 (Calopogon)

This rather common orchid is known as the Grass-Pink. The image was taken in a floating bog in Wayne County. When in bloom, the abundant plants make the bog look like a sea of pink.

Slide 32 (Calypso)

This is the Fairy Slipper Orchid. It is found in rich woods, usually under conifers. The image was taken on Flower Pot Island, north of Tobermory, Ontario Province. This orchid has two disjunct locations, the other being the Pacific Northwest, specifically Olympic Mountains National Park.

Slide 33 (Corallorhiza)

As the large white trillium is the provincial flower of Ontario, the striped coral-root is the provincial orchid. The blooms appear before the leaves, making the orchid appear like a candy cane, with its white and red striped stem. Locally, in Mendon Ponds County Park and in the hemlock woods near Dansville, the smaller spotted coral-root can be found.

The End.