



Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY



Striped Coralroot (*Corallorhiza striata*)

Did you Know?



The striped Coralroot is the largest of all the Coralroots and is shared with the family of orchids.

44 of the 65 orchids in Canada call Ontario home, and can be seen on the Escarpment.

This plant has no leaves.

It is classified as a saprophytic plant, meaning it has no chlorophyll and relies on fungi for nutrients and energy.

Habitat – Flourishes in coniferous and deciduous forests, especially open woods and very shade tolerant.

Size – Can grow up to 60 cm (24 in) high, with flowers of about 1.5 cm in size.

Range – Canada (excluding northern provinces), and can be found in almost all of the United States.

Status – Ontario Status: S4,Secure. Canadian Status: Secure.



Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY



Identification:

These orchids are the largest of the coralroots. The striped coralroot can be noted by the pale pinkish-white sepals and petals, or ruby red lips that grow along its red herbaceous stem with maroon thin stripes. There are red or purple spots inside each flower, marking the male and female parts. Typically it grows in clumps, rarely exceeding 40 cm in height in Ontario.



Interesting Facts

This plant does not contain chlorophyll, therefore photosynthesis cannot occur. Instead, the Striped Coralroot is dependent on getting its energy and nutrients from mycorrhizal fungi. The fungus infects its roots and gathers nutrients from surrounding organic matter. This is also the reason why this plant is not green.

This species got its name because the roots resemble coral, and *Corallorhiza* translates into “coral root” in Greek, and *Striata* meaning “striped”.

Another common name for this species of orchid is “fever root”, adopted because of its medicinal properties to help with fevers.

The pollination mechanism of this plant is unknown. One speculation is that when a gentle breeze hits the loose attachment of the labellum or lip, it will visibly shake.



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY



The Striped Coralroot on the Niagara Escarpment

Although populations are stable in Ontario and surrounding provinces and states, you can find the Striped Coralroot thriving throughout the understories of the Bruce Peninsula. It is locally common over much of the trail from the Milton area north to Tobermory, flowering from late May to July.

If you happen to come across this coralroot or any other orchid, please avoid stepping near or touching it. Most orchids have shallow, extensive and sensitive root systems with delicate flowers and stems that are easily damaged. Also, many orchids along the Bruce Trail take 10-16 years to reach flowering size; picking up or digging them up is not only illegal, but it prevents them from reproducing and it will die.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is continually acquiring and protecting land along the Niagara Escarpment, including shady forested areas which provide a perfect habitat for the Striped Coralroot. Be sure to look out for this very colourful species!