The genus Paphiopedilum Pfitzer commonly known as The Lady's Slipper Orchids are well known for their beautiful and usually long lasting unique flowers. The generic name of Paphipedilum 'Paphia (epithet of Venus) and 'Pedilon' (Sandal) refers to the beautiful slipper-like-form of the lip or labellum. The species of this group can easily be differentiated from other species in the family Orchidaceae by the presence of 2 anthers instead of the single anther, a shield like structure-staminode and the pouched lip or labellum. It is an Indo-Malesian genus comprising of 90 species in the world and 9 species in India. Out of which one species Paphiopedilum druryi (Bedd.) Stein is endemic to the western Ghats and the remaining 8 species (Paphiopedilum charlesworthii (Rolfe) Pfitzer, P. fairrieanum (Lindl.) Stein. P. hirsutissimum (Lindl. ex Hook.f.) Stein. P. insigne (Wall. ex Lindl.) Pfitzer, P. spicerianum (Rchb. f.) Pfitzer, P. venustum (Wall. ex Sims) Pfitzer. P. villosum (Lindl.) Stein and P. wardii Summerh.) are distributed to the North-eastern part of India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim) and West Bengal. They are terrestrial or epiphytic, sympodial herbs, roots thick, stems very short, leaves crowded at base, few to many, narrowly elliptic to suboblong, ovateelliptic, acute, to minutely bifid at apex, flowers large, showy, variable in colour. Labellum deeply pouch like. They are becoming rare and endangered in the wild due to over exploitation and destruction of their natural habitats because of human disturbances and deforestation. According to IUCN: ver. 2021-3, P. druryi and P. fairrieanum falls under the category of Critically Endangered (CR), P. charlesworthii, P. insigne, P. spicerianum, P. venustum and P. wardii falls under Endangered (EN) and P. hirsutissimum. P. villosum falls under Vulnerable (VU) category respectively. Seven species (P. druryi, P. fairrieanum, P. hirsutissimum, P. insigne, P. spicerianum, P. venustum and P. villosum) are well conserved and growing well under cultivation in National Orchidarium and Botanical Garden, Botanical Survey of India, Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong.



Paphiopedilum charlesworthii (Rolfe) Pfitzer

Dorsal sepal and synsepal of the flowers are pink or pinkish white to greenish white with reticulate veins. Petals pale greenish-yellow, with dense brown reticulate veins. Labellum pinkish-brown, with darker veins, hairy within. It blooms in the month of March to May in subtropical forestS. It is very rare and only distributed in Mizoram of Northeast India, China, Myanmar and Thailand falling under the category of Endangered (EN) under IUCN.



Paphiopedilum druryi (Bedd.) Stein

Dorsal, synsepals and petals of the flowers are golden yellow with a maroon brand. Labellum golden yellow, helmet-shaped, hairy within, glabrous on the surface. It blooms from February to March and is Endemic to Western Ghats. It falls under Critically Endangered category (CR) under IUCN.



Paphiopedilum fairrieanum (Lindl.) Stein

Flowers showy, dorsal sepals, synsepals sub-equal, white with dark purple reticulate nerves, ciliolate margins and slightly pubescent, spreading, petals purple ciliate on the margins, labellum yellow-green to olive with dark veining. It blooms from October to December in subtropical to temperate forests. It is very rare and only distributed in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal in India and Bhutan falling under the category of Critically Endangered (CR) under IUCN.



Paphiopedilum hirsutissimum (Lindl. ex Hook.) Stein

Dorsal sepal and synsepal of flowers dark brown, with yellowish or greenish margin, petals yellowish, with dense purple-brown speckles in basal half and purplish rose in apical half, labellum yellowish to greenish, with dense brownish or purplish rose speckles. It blooms from April to May and occurs in subtropical forests. It is becoming very rare and distributed in Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim in Northeast India, West Bengal and China, Myanmar, Thailand, Indo-China. The population is decreasing and falls under Vulnerable (VU) category under IUCN.



Paphiopedilum insigne (Wall. ex Lindl.) Pfitzer

Dorsal sepal of flowers are greenish yellow in centre, broadly white margined, with purple-brown spots, synsepal pale green-yellow, with purple-red or purple-brown spots and white margin, petals yellowish brown, with darker veins, labellum yellow-brown or yellowish green, flushed and veined with brown, with a narrow greenish margin. It blooms from October to December and occurs in subtropical forests. It is becoming very rare and distributed in Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim in Northeast India and West Bengal, Bangladesh, China. The population is decreasing and falls under Endangered (EN) category under IUCN.



Paphiopedilum spicerianum (Rchb.f.) Pfitzer

Dorsal sepal is white with maroon midvein, synsepal greenish, puberulent on both surfaces. Petals greenish white, speckled with maroon dots ventrally, margin undulate, dorsally villous, midvein brown-purple. Labellum, pale greenish brown or pale yellowish brown, veins dark brown, helmet-shaped. It blooms from October to January and occurs in tropical and subtropical forests. It is becoming very rare and distributed in Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, Sikkim in Northeast India, China and Myanmar. The population is decreasing and falls under Endangered (EN) category under IUCN.



Paphiopedilum venustum (Wall. ex Sims) Pfitzer

Dorsal sepal and synsepal white with green veins, petals yellow-whitish with green veins, flushed with purple in apical half, with a few large maroon warts mainly in basal half, dorsally greenish veined, labellum and staminode yellowish green. It blooms from December to March and occurs in subtropical forests. It is becoming very rare and distributed in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim in Northeast India, West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Nepal. The population is decreasing and falls under Endangered (EN) category under IUCN



Paphiopedilum villosum (Lindl.) Stein

Dorsal sepal greenish, centrally blackish maroon spotted, synsepal greenish, petals greenish with a deep maroon central stripe and maroon spots on inner side, labellum yellowish, with pale maroon veins. It blooms from October to February and occurs in subtropical forests. It is becoming very rare and distributed in Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim of Northeast India, China, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia. The population is decreasing and falls under Vulnerable (VU) category under IUCN



Paphiopedilum wardii Summerh.

Dorsal sepal and synsepal white or whitish green, veined with deep green, petals greenish white, flushed with purplish brown and spotted throughout with blackish brown, labellum greenish to pale yellow-brown, veined and finely spotted with brown. It blooms from September to February and occurs in subtropical forests. It is very rare and distributed in Arunachal Pradesh of Northeast India, China and Myanmar. The population is decreasing and falls under Endangered (EN) category under IUCN

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PAPHIOPEDILUM OF INDIA (THE LADY'S SLIPPER ORCHIDS)









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