

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 23, 2024



PRESS CONTACT

Erin Bird

m: 810-300-1294

o: 720-865-3552

erin.bird@botanicgardens.org

Newly Documented Orchid at Chatfield Farms: Rare Find in Colorado



During a [City Nature Challenge](#) citizen science event at Denver Botanic Gardens' Chatfield Farms in late April, My-Lan Le, graduate botany research assistant and Rebecca Hufft, Ph.D., associate director of applied conservation, noticed a small, peach-colored plant emerging next to a log and upon closer inspection, they realized it was striped coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza striata*).

This orchid species hadn't been recorded at Chatfield Farms and the only striped coralroot herbarium voucher in Jefferson County was made in 1905! While the striped coralroot orchid native range spans parts of Canada, the United States and Mexico, these plants usually grow in small numbers and are rare finds in Colorado.

"This finding is so exciting because even at a location that we have been working at for over 40 years, we still can find something new that has likely been under our noses this whole time," says Rebecca Hufft. She continues, "This is a good reminder of how important natural history is and for each of us to keep taking the time to observe nature where we work and live."

Striped coralroot orchids can't photosynthesize, instead gathering all their nutrients and energy by parasitizing fungi. They are recognizable as they don't have any green parts and they can live for several decades.

A specimen was collected to serve as a voucher for the Gardens' Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium. Having preserved specimens (vouchers) is important as a resource for research that cannot occur through written or photographic records.

"Knowing and documenting which species live in an area is the first step to successfully managing biodiversity and evaluating conservation implications" says My-Lan Le.

For the collection, Le and Hufft first confirmed that there were several other striped coralroot orchids in the area. Without the high contrast of the fallen log, the other dozen individuals nearby were camouflaged. They recorded notes about the habitat where the plants were found and carefully extracted two flowering stems and roots.

The specimen will be mounted on an herbarium sheet, accessioned and integrated into the Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium. This means the specimen will be digitized and searchable through public databases like [SEINET](#). Observations were also recorded on [iNaturalist](#), a user-populated nature database.

###

About Denver Botanic Gardens: Green inside and out, Denver Botanic Gardens was founded in 1951 and is considered one of the top botanical gardens in the United States and a pioneer in water conservation. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Gardens has a robust living plant collection, natural history collection and art collection along with temporary art exhibitions. The Gardens is a dynamic, 24-acre urban oasis in the heart of the city, offering unforgettable opportunities to flourish with unique garden experiences for the whole family – as well as world-class exhibitions, education and plant conservation research programs. Additional sites extend this experience throughout the Front Range: Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms is a 700-acre native plant refuge with an active farm in Jefferson County; Mount Goliath is a high-altitude trail and interpretive site on the Mount Blue Sky Scenic Byway. The Gardens also manages programming at Plains Conservation Center in Aurora. For more information, visit us online at www.botanicgardens.org.