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EXOTIC NATIVES: Appreciating & Growing Hardy Orchids | Earth911.com

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Orchids are fancy, exotic flowers that evoke steaming jungles and faraway lands. But if you are committed to growing native plants in your garden, orchids are still an option. Orchids don't have to be exotic imports that require a resource-intensive greenhouse. Some orchids are helpful pollinators that grow naturally in your own backyard.

Looking Past Lady's Slippers

By far the best-known native orchid is the lady's slipper. Lady's slipper orchids are in the genus *Cypripedium* in the Orchidaceae family. Twelve of the 50 species of lady's slipper orchid are native to the United States. Each of them would make an unusual and attractive addition to the home garden, but lady's slippers are not the final word in native orchids. North America has about 250 indigenous orchid species, about half of which are threatened or endangered. They grow in woodlands, prairies, and wetlands in every state of the U.S. and most of Canada.

