

Scented Orchid

Gymnadenia odoratissima (L.) Rich.

DESCRIPTION

Gymnadenia odoratissima is a tall (up to 50cm) very spindly plant which has between 4-8 basal leaves which are narrow and erect. The lax inflorescence is cylindrical when the flowers are fully open. The flowers are usually pale (occasionally darker) pink, and white forms are common in some areas. Each inflorescence carries fewer flowers than other closely related species. Flowering from May to the end of August.



HABITAT

This orchid seems to be less specific in terms of habitat than other members of the genus and appears in meadows, mountain pastures (up to 2.700m) and in damp to marshy ground as long as the underlying ground is calcareous and the positions are in full sunshine.

DISTRIBUTION

Gymnadenia odoratissima has a huge range and is recorded from Sweden in the north as far south as northern Spain. It is common in the central European mountain ranges and grows across a swathe of central Europe, Balkan and Apenins among others.

ENDANGERMENT

The biggest threat is the disappearance of open habitats in the mountains through natural successions of forest vegetation. This is particularly pronounced in southern Europe.

PROTECTION

In many European countries, it is on the list of endangered species, and as such it is permanently protected. It is on the CITES list of species and is also listed in the red books of several countries.



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