

### ***Cypripedium acaule***

While locally abundant in some states and in much of eastern Canada, in NJ it is not common. There is, however, one location, where we can experience this showy member of the orchid family - in the peculiarly named **Cheesequake State Park**. The name is of Lenape origin, but the exact meaning is unclear. In NJ **Cyp. acaule** blooms around Mothers Day, so plan your visit accordingly.

**All wild orchids are strictly protected. Use your camera, but do not dig!**

Take Garden State Parkway to exit 120, and follow the signs to Cheesequake State Park. In the park, follow signs to Hook Lake, and park in the main parking lot.

The site is a mixed forest across the marsh from the main parking lot by Hook Lake. Park on the outer perimeter, where there is a path leading to the boardwalk across the marsh (blue dotted line on the map).

Total distance across the board walk and into the woods is about 1/2 mile, so it only takes a few minutes to reach the target area. Where the boardwalk ends, continue straight ahead on the path about 2-300', and then look to your right. There are two main colonies, which have been fenced in to protect against poaching.

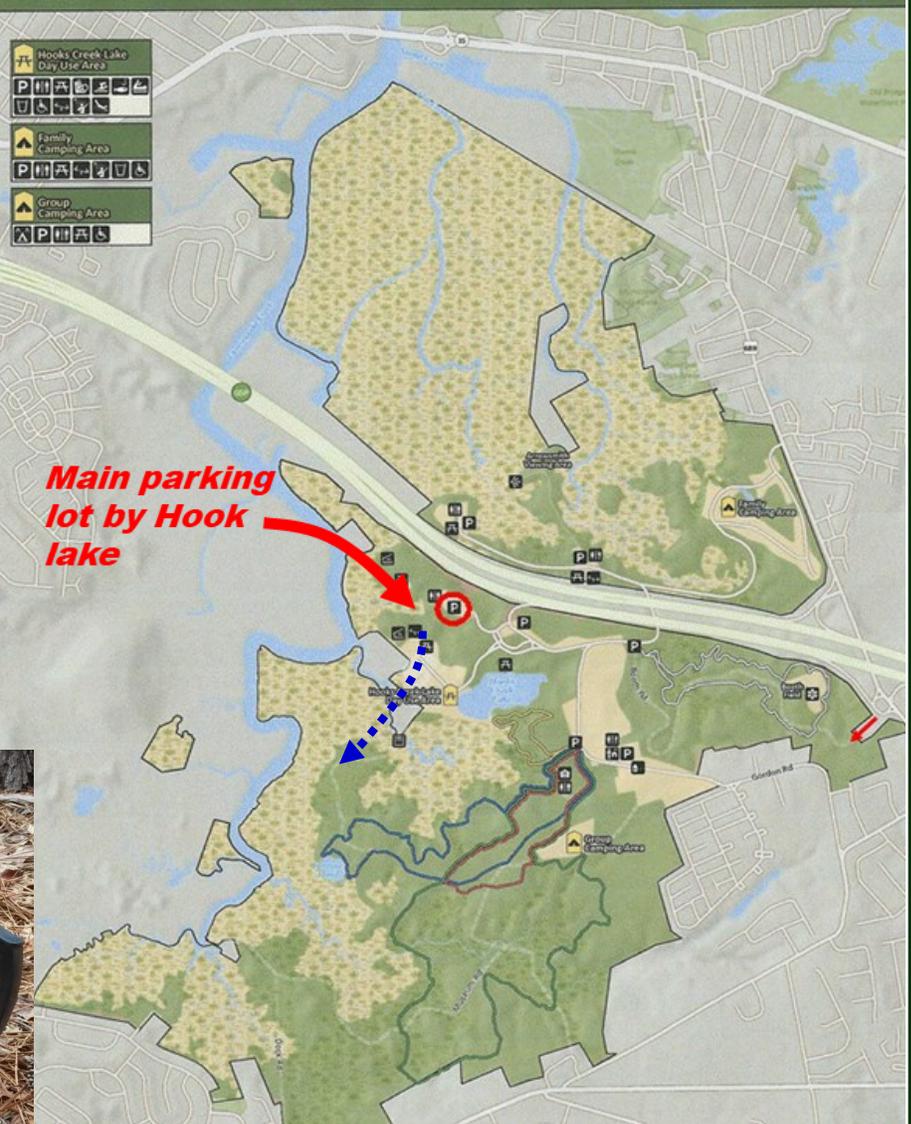


Once you see this display board, you have entering the right area. In following photos, red circles identify Cyp. Acaule plants that are not obvious.

Cypripedium acaule is not a large plant, but it is certainly noticeable when in bloom. Here with my travel tea mug for size reference:



## CHEESEQUAKE State Park



While there is a mix of both deciduous trees and conifers in the area, this *Cypripedium* grows almost exclusively where the ground is covered in pine needles, in moderate to high light levels and only in non-swampy ground. It is known to require high acidity (pH 4.5), making this plant extremely difficult to grow away from the natural habitat.

On a second visit, I roamed around away from the two enclosures. Having learned what to look for, I discovered many plants in other areas, both in an area on the right before you get to the enclosures, and also to the left of the path.

There were a lot of seedlings growing outside of the enclosures, so the population appears to be spreading (at least in 2017). Some were trampled by people not sufficiently careful, but I saw a lot of young plants, many at considerable distances from the enclosures. This included a few, that had germinated in unfortunate locations:

As I continued to look around, I discovered a 3rd colony, which was not fenced in. It was not quite as densely populated as the two in the fenced areas, but it covered a significantly larger area. The first photo shows where I noticed the first flowering plant in the 3rd colony. As you can see, they can be quite well camouflaged!



However, as I started scanning this area, I found many more plants towards the rear. Being a more shaded location, there were fewer plants in bloom in this area though.

I was able to get up close to these non-fenced plants.

Here one with the flower just opening; at this stage the pouch is cream colored, with the pink deepening as the flower matures.



This compares with freshly opened, and mature flowers:

