

Ashi-Nisiwi giizisoog (Thirteen Moons)

Wabigoon Giizis

The new moon that occurs on May 14 is **Wabigoon** giizis, or the “flowering moon.” Plant buds swell and flowers emerge in response to the sun’s stronger rays, warmer temperatures, and shorter nights. This moon is also known as *Zaagibagaagime giizis*, the budding moon.

The Flowering Moon

Submitted by Wayne Dupuis



Legends caution never pick a lady slipper. If any part is picked, the entire flower dies. It grows out in the woods (nopeming) to mark the courage and strength (mashkawisen) of a small girl (ikwewens) who lived long ago; a girl who saved her people from a terrible disease. She did so by listening carefully to the elements, the whispering snow, the rumbling ice, and the dancing northern lights (Jii-ba-yag-nii-mi-wag). As the story goes, a whole community became sick during the winter. One little girl travelled miles to a neighboring village to get medicine (mash-ki-ki), the healing herbs. Such journeys were not made in the winter (biboon) because of the deep snow and treacherous conditions. But everyone was sick and she was the only one that could possibly make the trip. She put her Ma-ki-sins on and stepped out into the raging storm that set upon the region just as she left to get the mash-ki-ki. She travelled over the deep ice covered lake and through the deep snow to the village that could supply the herbs needed to help

the peoples’ healing. Once she arrived the whole village welcomed her and offered to take her home when the snow subsided. She knew they would not let her leave during the storm so she left in the evening. During her travel home she got stuck in the snow and lost her ma-ki-sins. She continued to travel homeward and her exposed feet started to bleed, leaving blood stained marks in the snow. Because of the Mash-ki-ki the people were healed. However, the girl remained weak for a long, long time, but soon after the snow melted, she too recovered. In the spring (zeegwan), when the woods turned green, she and her brother went to search for her lost ma-ka-sins. On the spot where she had lost her them, and wherever her bleeding feet had stepped, beautiful flowers grew. They were pink and white and shaped just like the little ma-ka-sins she had worn on her journey. The people named the new flower ma-ka-sin waa-big-waan, which means moccasin flower. Today it is called the lady slipper.

Floral Designs and the Woodland Tribes

Language: a means of communication but also an evolving cultural resource that reflects its speakers, their community, and the place they live. Art, like language, is a communication form that includes storytelling, craft, and design. Art reflects its makers, their history, and place. Art is especially important in cultures with oral traditions, such as the Anishinaabe.

The Woodland Tribes are recognized for floral motifs that portray important plants, flowers, and berries. As one Anishinaabe man explains, “The plants are our elder brothers, created before us, not reliant upon us, but give us nourishment/life.

We create designs to honor our elder brothers and their natural beauty, but we will never truly recreate something so amazing, which is why we put a mistake in our artwork.” Floral motifs are are most often created using bead-work.

The floral design adorning this page was created by Karen Savage Blue for FDL Resource Management. It will be used on signs throughout the new RMD building. It is a typical motif in its use of the scroll pattern and the incorporation of plants important in this area, including blueberry, pin cherry, water lilly, and *makasin waa big waan*.



Ma ka sin waa big waan, or Lady Slipper.
Photo by Teresa Boardman, www.stpaulphotos.com

May Events:

- Building raised-bed gardens
- Wild foods

Details on the 13 Moons blog: <http://giizis13.wordpress.com>

Thirteen Moons is a monthly production of FDL Resource Management Division and University of Minnesota Extension. Content addresses culture, ecology, and natural resource management. Comments and contributions are welcome and should be directed to FDL RMD at 218-878-8001 or giizis13@gmail.com