

Adenochilus gracilis

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Gracile, terrestrial, rhizomatous, perennial herb without tubers. Plant at flowering up to 200 mm tall. **Stem** erect, slender. **Leaves**, glabrous, petiolate and cauline. Petiolate leaf arising from rhizome, separate and usually well spaced from flowering stem, emerging through a cylindrical sheath-like leaf, 10–30 mm long, green ovate to ovate-oblong or oblong, base cordate, apex acute to subacute; cauline leaf sessile, inserted about half-way up stem, 10–20 mm long, green, ovate to ovate-oblong, acute to subacute, base more or less cordate, occasionally shallowly notched.

Flower usually solitary, rarely paired, subtended by 1–2 floral bracts.

Perianth 10–20 mm diameter, external surfaces shortly and finely glandular pubescent. **Sepals** lanceolate, acute; dorsal sepal greenish, concave, strongly arched over column and fused to it near base; lateral sepals whitish, wide-spreading. **Petals** similar to sepals. **Labellum** much shorter and more or less obscured by overhanging dorsal sepal, shortly clawed, semi-erect; disc broad-oblong, mid-lobe narrow and recurved, bearing transverse red to maroon stripes, calli shortly stipitate, spheroidal, yellow, aligned in 2–4 longitudinal rows, extending inwards from broader part of mid-lobe. **Column** elongate, curved, winged throughout, the wings, membranous, upturned and more or less dentate-lobed above anther, reddish inside pale outside. **Anther** terminal incurved, pollinia mealy; stigma prominent, rostellum 2-lobed

SIMILAR TAXA

On account of its whitish flowers with their externally glandular pubescent covering *Adenochilus* is most often confused with species of *Caladenia* R.Br., from which genus it is easily recognised by its rhizomatous, non-tuberous growth habit, and by its separate, ovate, ovate-oblong, petiolate and cauline leaves. *Caladenia* have 1–(2) linear, linear-lanceolate or lanceolate hairy leaves.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Coromandel Range south), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

In the northern part of its range usually montane otherwise widespread in lowland to alpine habitats. A species of thick moss mats or deep drifts of semi-decomposed leaf litter under forest, subalpine scrub or in sphagnum moss bordering wetlands. Often found in exotic forests, particularly pine plantations.



Close up of flower. Iwitihi. Photographer: Bill Campbell, Date taken: 06/12/2015, Licence: CC BY.



Iwitihi. Photographer: Bill Campbell, Date taken: 06/12/2015, Licence: CC BY.

GENUS

Adenochilus

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Adenochilus gracilis Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–March

FRUITING

December–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

adenochilus: From the Greek aden ‘gland’ and cheilos ‘lip’

gracilis: Slender

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to native orchids of New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

ADEGRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025”](#) Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1980).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/adenochilus-gracilis/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026