

Bulbophyllum pygmaeum

COMMON NAME

pygmy tree orchid, bulbophyllum

SYNONYMS

Ichthyostomum pygmaeum (Sm.) D.L.Jones, M.A.Clem. et Molloy

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Bulbophyllum pygmaeum (Sm.) Lindl.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

NVS CODE

ICHPYG

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 38$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Three Kings, North, South, Stewart Islands.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Mostly epiphytic on forest tree trunks and branches, sometimes on fallen logs, and found as a also rupestral on rocks, cliff faces or banks.



Pygmy tree orchid. Photographer: Andrew Townsend



Silverstream Scenic Reserve, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Epiphytic or rupestral, rhizomatous, perennial forming widely spreading or diffuse mats up to 200 mm or more in diameter. Rhizomes heavily branched and intertwined, vermiform, pale pink to white, more or less fleshy, spongy; roots numerous slightly finer than rhizomes otherwise every similar. Pseudobulbs 3-5 mm diameter, green, bright green to pale green, globose, rugose, becoming deeply furrowed and wrinkled with age; each bearing a single leaf arising from the top within a somewhat prominent circular rim. Leaf subsessile to shortly petiolate up to 1.5 mm long; lamina 4-10 x 2-4 mm, dark green to green (rarely reddish green), oblong-ovate to almost orbicular, apex obtuse, upper surface minutely scabrid; undersides prominently keeled. Flower solitary, located on the terminus of a greenish valvate capsule comprising the ovary; peduncle arising from base of pseudobulb, up to 2.5-3.5 mm long at flowering, usually elongating in fruit. Floral bract 1(-2), campanulate-tubular to funneliform, membranous, hyaline or pale white. Pedicel very short (0.5-0.7 mm long), coarsely hirsute; ovary ovoid-ellipsoid, coarsely hirsute, splitting lengthwise at dehiscence. Perianth 1.5-2.0 mm long, white. Sepals minutely hairy, dorsal sepal shorter than lateral sepals. Petals broad, almost meeting behind column. Labellum ovate-oblong, obtuse, more or less thickened, roofing over pouch formed by lateral sepals and column foot. Column barely as long as its foot; wing not exceeding anther.

SIMILAR TAXA

Bulbophyllum pygmaeum could be confused with *B. tuberculatum* but that species has a less diffuse, more compact growth habit; much larger dark green to maroon green, erect, ovoid to ovoid-ellipsoid pseudobulbs; larger and longer, linear-oblong leaves (up to 50 x 5 mm), usually more than one flower; and flowers which have orange to red labella, and white or pale cream petals and sepals. The leaves and ovary of *B. tuberculatum* lack the minute, coarse hairs that are a feature of *B. pygmaeum*. The ovary of *B. tuberculatum* does not at maturity split to become valvate, nor does it retain the flower remnants on the uppermost valve.

FLOWERING

December - January

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

January - May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a hanging basket in standard orchid mix. Often can be strapped to a tree trunk and provided it is kept moist during the drier months it grows readily. This species does best in semi-shade. Should not be removed from the wild

ETYMOLOGY

pygmaeum: Pigmy

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

The generic distinction of *Ichthyostomum* from *Bulbophyllum* was always considered unclear and many botanists did not accept the division. Recently Australian orchidologists have rejected this genus and returned to a broader circumscription of *Bulbophyllum* (P. Weston pers. comm. 2014), this view is accepted here

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. Government Printer, Wellington.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11: 285-309

CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/bulbophyllum-pygmaeum/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/bulbophyllum-pygmaeum/>