

Bulbophyllum tuberculatum

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Epiphytic orchid forming tightly clumped masses up to 60 mm diameter on canopy branches and trunks of forest trees. **Roots** numerous, threaded tightly through encrusting lichens and other epiphytic plants. **Pseudobulbs** conspicuous, 6-18 x 3-6 mm, green to dark green, ovoid to narrowly ovoid, turgid, smooth surface often spotted with white mealy cells, apex surmounted by tightly clasping, much reduced scale leaf. **Leaf** appearing sessile, usually solitary (rarely 2), up to 50 x 5 mm, dark green to purple-green, linear-oblong, acute, glabrous. **Flowers** racemose, 1-several-flowered, peduncle 10–20 mm long arising from base of pseudobulb; floral bracts triangular, pedicels very short. **Ovary** minutely tuberculate. **Perianth** 4 mm long, all aprts except labellum, white to whitish-pink. **Dorsal sepal** narrow-ovate. **Lateral sepal** similar but broader to triangular-ovate, slightly pouched at base. **Petals** smaller, ovate, obtuse. **Labellum** mobile on long slender claw; oblong-obovate to sub-hastate, orange to red, fading toward a yellow base; proximal part with 2 raised ridges, margins recurved at apex. **Column** short, 2-winged at apex. **Capsules** ovoid.

SIMILAR TAXA

None in New Zealand.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Kaitia south to Wellington), South island (Marlborough and North-west Nelson). Probably more widespread than this as easily overlooked.

HABITAT

An epiphytic plant, usually found on trunks and inner branches of trees in lowland or coastal districts. Favoured trees seem to be mataī (*Prumnopitys taxifolia* (D.Don) de Laub.), kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides* (A.Rich.) de Laub.), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum* Lamb.), tōtara (*Podocarpus totara* G.Benn. ex D.Don), tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa* G.Benn.), hīnau (*Elaeocarpus dentatus* (J.R.Forst. et G.Forst.) Vahl) and rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa* R.Br.). It is always found with grey lichens of the genus *Rimelia* Hale et A.Fletcher, *Physcia* (Schred.) Michx., *Heterodermia* Trevis., and *Ramalina* Ach., and often threaded through the climbing fern *Pyrrhosia eleagnifolia* (Bory) Hovenkamp.

THREATS

Probably quite common, but easily overlooked, and current records imply it is naturally sparse. There have been some documented instances where accessible populations have been stripped bare by plant collectors, which is probably the only serious threat to this species. For this reason it is better to use caution when disclosing new findings.

GENUS

Bulbophyllum



Bulbophyllum tuberculatum close up of flowers. Photographer: A. J. Townsend, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Courtman Forest. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Bulbophyllum tuberculatum Colenso

SYNONYMS

Adelopetalum tuberculatum (Colenso) D.L.Jones, M.A.Clem. et Molloy

TAXONOMIC NOTES

The transfer of *Bulbophyllum tuberculatum* to *Adelopetalum* was made with minimal explanation. Australian orchidologists have rejected *Adelopetalum* in favour of a broader circumscription of *Bulbophyllum* (P. Weston pers. comm. 2014). This view is accepted here.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(September)–November–April

FRUITING

November–August

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Not well known. Pieces taken from fallen branches have been successfully cultivated in standard orchid mix, or when strapped to a suitable branch, and these plants have frequently flowered. It is probably very easy to grow

ETYMOLOGY

tuberculatum: Bearing little tubers

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

BULTUB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp, St

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland”](#) Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Anonymous. 1962. *Bulbophyllum tuberculatum* Col. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 19: 1–2.
- Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.
- Moss TC. 1968. Notes on *Bulbophyllum tuberculatum*(Orchidaceae). *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin* 35: 36–39.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007: Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

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25 May 2026