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** conpsicuous, 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 × 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.

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.

SIMILAR TAXA
None in New Zealand.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Kaitaia 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 matai (*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 *Pyrrosia 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

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.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 July 2026