

# Calochilus herbaceus

## COMMON NAMES

copper beard orchid

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, SO, Sp

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Violet/Purple

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout orchid 300–700 mm tall. **Stem** erect, glaucous green to green, fleshy, rather stout. **Leaf** fleshy, linear-lanceolate, glaucous-green to dark green, channelled, sheathing at base. **Cauline bracts** similar but much shorter. **Inflorescence** a raceme of (1)–2–(5) flowers. **Floral bracts** narrow, acute, overtopping ovary. **Perianth** green, glaucous-green to bright green except for the violet lamina and red cilia of labellum. **Dorsal sepal** 10–15 mm long, broad-elliptic, acute, somewhat folded about column. **Lateral sepals** similar though smaller. **Petals** shorter, obliquely deltoid, apex subacute, directed toward dorsal sepal, green finely striped with red. **Labellum** violet, with a green apex, not much larger than sepals and petals; ligulate apex short, sinuous; disc broad with shorter, fewer processes; base bearing two, longitudinal metallic blue (rarely green) plate-like calli. **Column wings** with one distinct, dark gland or callus near base.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Immediately distinguished from *Calochilus robertsonii* Benth., and *C. paludosus* R.Br., by the greenish-yellow flowers with red striped petals, a distinctive violet blue labellum, bearing red whisker-like cilia.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (formerly recorded from the Aranga Swamp near Maunganui Bluff. It is now known from a few scattered populations ranging from Te Paki south to Albany). Also Australia.

## HABITAT

A coastal and lowland species of open ground within gum land scrub, peat bogs, ephemeral wetlands and clay pans.

## THREATS

Habitat loss and plant collectors are the main threats to this attractive bearded orchid.

## GENUS

Calochilus

## FAMILY

Orchidaceae



Flower bud at anthesis. Albany, Auckland.  
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:  
26/10/2008, Licence: CC BY.



In gumland scrub. Albany, Auckland.  
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:  
01/11/2008, Licence: CC BY.

## AUTHORITY

*Calochilus herbaceus* Lindl.

## SYNONYMS

New Zealand plants have been called *C. campestris* R.Br. another Australian species to which *C. herbaceus* is allied.

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

New Zealand plants and some Australian populations differ slightly from *C. herbaceus* sens. str. and it is thought that they probably warrant separate taxonomic recognition (D.L. Jones pers. comm.).

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

October–February

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

## ETYMOLOGY

**calochilus**: From Greek kalos (beautiful) and cheilos (lip), referring to the attractive labellum

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, SO, Sp

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, SO, Sp

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: SO, EF, Sp

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: RR, Sp, TO 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

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

### **ATTRIBUTION**

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

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### **MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/calochilus-herbaceus/>

### **PDF DATE**

25 May 2026