

# Corybas acuminatus

## COMMON NAMES

spider orchid

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Mainly solitary, terrestrial, tuberous, glabrous, winter to summer-green herb. Plant at flowering up to 60 mm tall. **Leaf** sessile, up to 40 × 20 mm, ovate-acuminate to deltoid, repand, cordate at the base, margins usually undulating; light green above with conspicuous reddish veining, silvery beneath. Leaves of young plants reniform or broadly cordate, rarely pandurate, apiculate, without reddish veining. **Floral bract** shortly caudate, secondary bract subulate. **Flower** usually solitary, sessile, more or less translucent, with dull red stripes. **Dorsal sepal** up to 40 mm long, extending as horizontal, filiform caudae. **Lateral sepals** filiform, erect and very long, tapering, exceeding the flower by as much as 60 mm. **Petals** similar, smaller, horizontal or deflexed. **Labellum** bearing two rounded auricles near base; lamina expanded, abruptly deflexed, mucronate, the margins irregularly fimbriate to entire. **Column** very short with large basal callus; column-wings minutely denticulate and exceeding the anther; stigma orbicular, pollinia 4, massulate. **Seeding peduncle** up to 180 tall.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the green, sessile, triangular, sharply acute leaf with undulating margins and reddish veins, and by the very long dorsal and lateral sepals, and very pale translucent greenish-white, purple flecked flower.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Auckland Islands.

## HABITAT

Lowland to subalpine in damp, usually shaded sites. Preferring tall indigenous forest but also found under dense scrub and around tarns and mires.

## GENUS

Corybas

## FAMILY

Orchidaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Corybas acuminatus* M.A.Clements et Hatch

## SYNONYMS

*Corysanthes acuminata* (M.A.Clem. et Hatch) Szlach.; *Nematoceras acuminatum* (M.A.Clem. et Hatch) Molloy, D.L.Jones et M.A.Clem.



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## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Considerable research is underway to investigate the validity of the segregate genera split from *Corybas* R.Br. by Jones et al. (2002). Whilst much of that work has yet to be published, on advice from Australian Orchidologists Peter Weston and Stephen Hopper (pers. comm., July 2011, November 2014), all of the segregate genera recognised for New Zealand by Jones et al. (2002) are returned to *Corybas*.

Lehnebach (2016) made three combinations for those *Nematoceras* lacking valid names in *Corybas*. This action now enables the full transfer of *Nematoceras* back to *Corybas*. However, as of writing, a formal publication rejecting the segregation of *Corybas* by Jones et al. (2002) has yet to be published. Lehnebach cites an unpublished PhD (Lyon 2014) that indicates this move is imminent.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

August–December

## FRUITING

October–April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild. Can be grown in basic orchid mix consists of 2 parts medium coarse sand, ideally clean river sand; 2 parts soil, humus or leaf-mould; 1 part weathered sawdust or rotting wood; 1 part granulated bark. Many *Corybas* thrive when more leaf-mould is added, and the plants grown in 50–70% shade, in the cooler, darker end of the shade-house, in pots kept moist throughout the growing period.

## ETYMOLOGY

**corybas**: Helmet flower

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

CORACU

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT 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.

Otago: 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. 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

- Clements MA, Hatch ED. 1985. *Corybas acuminatus* (Orchidaceae)—a new name for the species previously considered to be *Corybas rivularis*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 23: 491-494.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1985.10425349>.
- Jones DL, Clements MA, Sharma IK, Mackenzie AM, Molloy BPJ. 2002. Nomenclatural notes arising from studies into the Tribe *Diurideae* (Orchidaceae). *The Orchadian* 13(10): 437-468.  
<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/310769#page/2/mode/1up>.
- Lehnebach C. 2016. New combinations and a replacement name for three New Zealand spider orchids (*Corybas*). *The New Zealand Native Orchid Journal* 139. 4-5.
- Lyon SP. 2014. Molecular systematics, biogeography, and mycorrhizal associations in the Acianthinae (Orchidaceae), with a focus on the genus *Corybas*. PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.  
<https://asset.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/UAXO3VHO6P7EH8Y/R/file-19145.pdf>.
- Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. Description based on: Clements (1985). This was the species treated as *C. rivularis* (*Nematoceras rivulare* (A.Cunn.) Hook.f.) by Moore in Moore & 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/corybas-acuminatus/>

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026