

Corybas oblongus

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

Violet/Purple, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, tuberous, winter-spring flowering, glabrous perennial herb. Plant at flowering 20–30 mm tall, usually much taller in fruit. **Stem** erect, purple-red, maroon or pale whitish. **Leaf** usually solitary, rarely paired, sessile, rather membranous, 10–40 mm long, upper surface dark green, green with red flecks, or green with red veins, undersides silvery-red or silvery-white, ovate-oblong, apex apiculate, base cordate or rounded, margins undulose or plane, entire. **Floral bract** prominent, foliaceous, equal in length to ovary, broadly ovate to elliptic, hyaline, pale green or pale yellow, usually flecked with red, purple or maroon. **Flowers** 1–(2). **Dorsal sepal** slightly longer than labellum, somewhat fleshy, broadly spatulate, apex broadly obtuse to apiculate, hyaline, whitish flecked with purple or red to greenish-white (rarely completely white) with red flecks; lateral sepals white to slightly off-white or completely beetroot purple, hyaline, very long, filiform. **Petals** similar to lateral sepals but slightly shorter. **Labellum** horizontal, or slightly tilted upwards, 5–10 mm long, dark crimson, to crimson-purple (almost black) or rarely completely white, base auriculate, otherwise curved to form a cylinder with a wide flaring, fimbriate mouth (fringed with numerous coarse hyaline teeth); internally with numerous retrorse hair like cilia present from near the mid-line back. **Fruit** a broadly cylindrical to ovoid-ellipsoid capsule, borne on a peduncle which usually elongates greatly at fruiting.

SIMILAR TAXA

None when flowering. The dark crimson coloured frimbriate labellum (with its conspicuous fringe of hyaline teeth) is extremely distinctive. Only *Corybas cryptanthus* has a similar fimbriate flower but that saprophytic species lacks leaves (and chlorophyll), is rhizomatous, and its flowers are usually hyaline with purple or red flecks or more rarely completely colourless. The sessile usually dark green red flecked or red veined leaves with their usually undulose margins are also rather diagnostic.

DISTRIBUTION

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



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 20/10/2006, Licence: CC BY.



Zion Hill, Karekare. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (up to 1200 m a.s.l.). Widespread on consolidated sand within shrubland and sand dune forests, in shrubland, tall forest, lowland peat bogs and subalpine mires and in cloud forest. Often found on mossy banks within dense forest, or on the margins of slow flowing forest streams.

GENUS

Corybas

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Corybas oblongus (Hook.f.) Rchb.f.,

SYNONYMS

Corysanthes oblonga (Hook.f.) Hook.f., *Nematoceras oblongum* Hook.f. *Singularybas oblongus* (Hook.f.) Molloy, D.L.Jones et M.A.Clem.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Segregate genera that were split from *Corybas* R.Br. by Jones et al. (2002) were not universally accepted and further research has been carried out into the genus. On advice from Australian Orchidologists Peter Weston and Stephen Hopper (pers. comm., July 2011, November 2014), NZPCN has returned all of the segregate genera recognised for New Zealand by Jones et al. (2002) to *Corybas* (see also Lyon 2014).

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

September–February

FRUITING

November–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be moved from the wild.

ETYMOLOGY

corybas: Helmet flower

oblongus: Oblong

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COROBL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = c.34, 34$

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 Not Threatened 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

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>.

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 (1 January 2005). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/corybas-oblongus/>

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