

Corybas obscurus

COMMON NAMES

spider orchid

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial herbs, 14–30 mm tall at flowering. **Leaf** distinctly petiolate, petiole 5.1–40.8 mm long; lamina reniform to cordiform, 5.8–18.2 × 9.6–26.7 mm; margin entire; apex mucronate with mucro 1.1–2.5 mm long. **Flower** solitary, held erect on a peduncle 2.0–7.8 mm long, floral bract triangular to sub-triangular when flattened, 2.3–7.7 × 1.5–4.0 mm; **dorsal sepal** dark red to dark maroon to black, arching over the labellum, concave to cucullate, narrow at the base and widely spatulate towards the tip, apex retuse to emarginated; lateral sepal linear-filiform, crimson to dark red, 11.7–20.6 mm long; petals similar to the lateral sepals but longer, 27.3–57.2 mm long; **labellum** mostly dark crimson to almost black with a pale green centre, auriculate at base, aperture 1.6–2.4 mm in diameter; lamina deflexed, c. 10 mm wide, with a central groove formed by the inwards folding of the lamina, extending downwards almost to the lower margin and sunken pit formed at the point where the lamina bends, margin incurving, mostly entire but erose at the lower edge, inner surface of the labellum covered glandular trichomes. **Ovary** 3.0–8.4 mm long. **Column** 1.6 mm long, curved, retuse column wings at either sides of the stigma.

SIMILAR TAXA

Morphologically similar to *C. confusus* in lip colour but differs by its short dorsal sepal firmly appressed against the upper margins of the labellum and reniform to cordiform leaf. It differs from *C. trilobus* by the overall non-transparent, dark maroon to black flower.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Nelson Lakes district).

HABITAT

A species of primarily beech southern beech forest (*Fuscospora* or *Lophozonia*, (Nothofagaceae)) or *Kunzea* / *Leptospermum* forest and scrub, where it grows in leaf litter. Collections have been made from an altitudinal range spanning 600–1000 m.

GENUS

Corybas

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Corybas obscurus Lehnebach

SYNONYMS

None first described in 2016

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No



ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–November

FRUITING

November–December

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild

ETYMOLOGY

corybas: Helmet flower

obscurus: Usually taken to mean something that is ‘unclear, uncertain, unknown, in doubt, doubtful, dubious, mysterious, hazy, vague, indeterminate, concealed, hidden’

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Lehnebach CA, Zeller AJ, Frericks J, Ritchie P. 2016. Five new species of *Corybas* (Diurideae, Orchidaceae) endemic to New Zealand and phylogeny of the *Nematoceras* clade. *Phytotaxa* 270(1): 1–24.

<https://doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.270.1.1>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (13 August 2016). Description from Lehnebach et al. (2016)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026