

Drymoanthus flavus

COMMON NAMES

spotted fleshy tree orchid

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive epiphyte of trunks and branches relatively clean of other epiphytic plants. Occasionally found on rock outcrops and cliff faces. Forming branched, leafy, tufts (20)–30–60–(80) mm diameter, with many white to brown, cord-like roots firmly attached to substrate. **Leaves** (10)–30–50–(70) × (5)–15–(20) mm, green or yellowish green, frequently purple spotted, leathery, elliptic to lanceolate, with acute often twisted tips. **Inflorescences** racemose, one or more per stem, up to 50 mm long, bearing (1)–2–6–(10) flowers. **Flowers** at first yellowish-green flecked with purple, maturing yellow. **Lateral sepals and petals** subequal, spreading widely but projecting forwards and inwards to form a cup; lateral sepals shorter, petals 2.5–3 × 1.5 mm. **Dorsal sepal** 3.5–4 × 1.5 mm. **Labellum** 2 × 1.8 mm, projected forwards, immobile, concave, channelled, apex thickened, fleshy, clear yellow, lacking distal lamina calli. **Capsule** 15 × 5 mm, fusiform, yellowish green and purple spotted.

SIMILAR TAXA

Allied to *Drymoanthus adversus* from which it differs by its smaller size; thinner more leathery, elliptic to lanceolate, acute, dull pale green, mostly spotted leaves; yellow flowers; trough-shaped labellum without distal lamina calli; frequently spotted capsules; and by its diploid chromosome number.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, scattered sites from Waitomo, Whirinaki Forest and Te Kopia Geothermal Reserve (Paeroa Range) to Wellington and Palliser Bay), South Island (sparsely distributed, only becoming more common in southern Otago, Southland), Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT

A trunk and branch epiphyte of lowland to montane forest.

THREATS

Threatened by indiscriminate plant collectors. With some well known locations stripped bare in recent years.

GENUS

Drymoanthus

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Drymoanthus flavus St George et Molloy



On black beech (*Fuscospora solandri*), Wainuiomata. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 31/10/2016, Licence: CC BY.



On black beech (*Fuscospora solandri*), Wainuiomata. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 31/10/2016, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–November

FRUITING

December–July

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild. Plants can be grown by strapping them to a log, or wood slab and placing them suspended in a sheltered, warm position. Water frequently until well established.

CULTIVATION

Not commercially available but plants are held by specialist growers.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for March 2024](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

flavus: Pale yellow

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

DRYFLA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: PD, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Serious Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NStr, Sp, TL 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

- Molloy BPJ, St. George IM. 1994. A new species of *Drymoanthus* (Orchidaceae) from New Zealand, and typification of *D. adversus*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 32(4): 415–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1994.10412928>.
- Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 August 2003. Description based on Molloy & St George (1994).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/drymoanthus-flavus/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026