

Gastrodia minor

COMMON NAMES

gastrodia

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Black, Brown

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, saprophytic, deciduous, fleshy, perennial herb lacking chlorophyll. Plant at flowering up to 300 mm tall. **Rhizome** mycorrhizal, tuberous, rather swollen, short-lived, extensively branched, individual sections up to 40 × 10 mm, dull pale brown to brownish-black, sparsely clad in chartaceous scales, especially toward the active apex. **Stem** 1.5–2 mm diameter, dark brown to brown-black, slender, rather brittle when fresh. **Scale leaves** chartaceous, few, small and widely spaced. **Flowers** up to 10, brownish-black, usually cleistogamous, unscented, erect to spreading, tubular, sparsely tuberculate toward base, tubercles paler in colour. **Perianth** 6–10 × 2–4 mm, lobes slightly thickened toward margins. **Lateral sepals** fused slightly above the gibbous base otherwise with their margins lying close together. **Labellum** 2.5–4 × 1.0–2.0 mm, white, narrow-oblong, membranous, not irritable, completely enclosed within floral tube (apex just visible in the open flowers) and mostly fused to it, thickened distally, margins narrow, slightly undulose, bearing two long median, cristate, pinkish white calli, apex yellow. **Column** very short, wing a minute, erect, process; anther terminal, erect and bending forwards, short, ellipsoid, operculate, filament scarcely pleated at the back, pollen breaking into angular granules; stigma basal, immediately below anther, ellipsoid, hollow; rostellum flap-like, positioned under anther.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from the other New Zealand *Gastrodia* species by its much smaller size (up to 300 mm tall), and fewer flowered (< 10), much narrower, smaller, mostly blackish-brown, tubular flowers that scarcely open (if at all). The perianth lobes are internally white, and the labellum distinctly yellow-tipped.

DISTRIBUTION

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

HABITAT

Lowland to montane (up to 1200 m a.s.l.). Usually in shrubland, often dominated by kahikatoa (*Leptospermum scoparium* J.R.Forst. et G.Forst.) or members of the kānuka (*Kunzea* spp.) genus. Also commonly seen within pine plantations and growing amongst Spanish heather (*Erica lusitanica* Ruldophi).

GENUS

Gastrodia



Teetotal, St Arnaud. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 07/01/2015, Licence: CC BY.



Longitudinal section showing short column at base of flower. Hokio Beach, Levin. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/12/2014, Licence: CC BY.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Gastrodia minor Petrie

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November–March

FRUITING

January–April

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

A saprophytic species which should not be removed from the wild. Difficult to grow.

ETYMOLOGY

gastrodia: Belly tooth (flower centre)

minor: Smaller

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

GASMIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

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 Data Deficient 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 | Qualifiers: 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

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

Rolfe J. 2017. [Guide to New Zealand Gastrodia \(Orchidaceae\)](#) (pdf, 5Mb).

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

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gastrodia-minor/>

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