

Gastrodia sesamoides

COMMON NAME

gastrodia, pot-bellied orchid, cinnamon sticks

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Gastrodia sesamoides R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

NVS CODE

GASSES

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38-40

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand recorded from North and South Islands,. In the South Island is is only known from Marlborough and Nelson.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 1000 m as.l.). Favouring disturbed habitats, coastal wetlands and associated shrublands, gumland scrub, and open sites along forest margins or in secondary regrowth. Often found in plantation forestry, and also occasionally found in urban areas often in traffic islands or public plantings, where it seems to be associated with pine bark mulch.



Flowering *Gastrodia sesamoides*.

Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Te Pahi. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Terrestrial, saprophytic, deciduous, fleshy, perennial herb lacking chlorophyll. Rhizome up to 80 x 30 mm, tuberous, elongated, swollen, mycorrhizal, pale pinkish-brown to brown to brownish-black, often covered in chartaceous scales and scale-leaves, especially toward the active apex. Plant at flowering up to 1 m tall. Stem 2-7 mm diameter, dark brown to brown with lighter brown coloured, small spots, erect, stout or slender, rather brittle when fresh. Scale leaves widely spaced, chartaceous. Flowers mostly less than 20, mostly unscented, sometimes faintly scented; pendulous such that dorsal sepal frequently touches the stem axis. Perianth 10-16 x 4-8 mm, basally light brownish or mustard, pinkish or pinkish cream toward apex, unspotted, smooth, rarely with a few small tubercles; lobes slightly thickened toward margins. Lateral sepals fused almost to level of labellum-tip. Labellum 10 x 4 mm, white, cream, or yellowish, membranous above, thickened below, somewhat irritable, completely enclosed within floral tube (apex just visible), ovate-oblong, trilobed, base shortly fused to gibbous perianth-tube, lateral-lobes with upturned, irregular, crenate, margins; mid-lobe yellowish with flat but irregular margins, bearing several long median, verrucose, cristate, pinkish-white or cream calli. Column almost as tall as labellum, very narrowly winged throughout; anther terminal, erect and bending forwards, short and broad, operculate, filament smooth, pollen breaking into angular granules; stigma basal, set well apart from and far below anther, broad, hollow; rostellum flap-like, positioned under anther.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished by its ecology - as this species frequents coastal wetlands and favours disturbed habitats such that it is often found in locations completely over run by naturalised plants. *Gastrodia sesamoides* has paler, flowers than the other two New Zealand species, and they lack spots and have a mostly non-tuberculate, smooth surface. Of critical diagnostic importance is that the column is almost the same length as the labellum.

FLOWERING

August - March

FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Red/Pink

FRUITING

October - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

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

ETYMOLOGY

gastrodia: Belly tooth (flower centre)

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

New Zealand plants differ somewhat from Australian plants of *G. sesamoides* (from where it was first described) and they probably warrant formal separation at species rank.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

[NZPCN Gastrodia Key](#) prepared by Jeremy Rolfe (pdf, 5Mb)

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. Government Printer, Wellington.

MORE INFORMATION

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