

# Microtis oligantha

## COMMON NAME

small onion orchid

## SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1967)

## FAMILY

Orchidaceae

## AUTHORITY

Microtis oligantha L.B.Moore

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

## NVS CODE

MICOLI

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Chatham Islands.

## HABITAT

Damp places in tussock grassland, on lake, tarn, river and wetland margins. Coastal to subalpine. Mainly montane to subalpine in the North Island, descending to sea level in the South and Chatham Islands

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).



Klondyke, Arthurs pass, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Klondyke, Arthurs pass, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, glabrous, fleshy, tuberous bright green to dark green perennial herb forming small colonies or occurring as solitary plants. Plants at flowering up to 150 mm tall. **Tubers** globose to ovoid. **Stem** erect, terete, fleshy. Leaf solitary, usually overtopping inflorescence (but often damaged and so falling short), bright green to dark green, rarely tinged with red near base, closely sheathing stem for much of length, linear-terete, hollow, up to 200 mm long. **Inflorescence** a loose raceme up to 30 × 5 mm. **Flowers** 1–10, up to 2.8 mm diameter, shortly-stalked mostly widely spaced. **Perianth** green, segments up to 1.8 mm long, widely spreading, thick and fleshy. **Dorsal sepal** 2.5 mm long, broadly ovate, erect or projecting forwards, cucullate, concave, column-embracing, apex and margins rounded (without recurved apex), smaller than ovary at flowering. **Lateral sepals** much shorter, narrower, mostly acute to subacute, strongly deflexed, apices straight. **Petals** shorter again, broadly to narrowly obtuse, erect, mostly hidden under dorsal sepal. **Labellum** sessile, up to 2.0 mm long, green or yellow-green, oblong, slightly narrowed at mid-length; apex bluntly truncate rarely slightly emarginate, not apiculate; margin papillose, shallowly crenate, often thickened, rarely undulate; anterior callus variously developed, verrucose, rather irregular, often raised on a rounded ridge; basal calli conspicuous, dark green, tabular-ovoid to tabular, usually continuous at sides with narrow band of callus behind a transverse, slit-like (not pouched) furrow; labellum sharply deflexed, pendulous aligned more or less parallel to the ovary. **Column** short, obtuse, base of column mostly broader than stigma, wings mostly membranous throughout. **Anther** terminal, erect, situated above stigma, hemispherical, pollinia spheroidal, pollen granular. **Stigma** broadly ovate; rostellum ovate **Capsules** broadly ovoid, ovoid-ellipsoid, brown when ripe.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to native orchids of New Zealand

## SIMILAR TAXA

Usually smaller than the other species of *Microtis* and with fewer flowers (up to 10). This species is best recognised by the obtuse rather than acute dorsal sepal whose apex is not upturned, and by the short-oblong to almost quadrate labellum with only shallowly crenate or rarely undulate margins. The labellum calli are indistinct and tabular.

## FLOWERING

December–March

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green

## FRUITING

March–May

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a damp sunny position. Should not be removed from the wild.

## ETYMOLOGY

**microtis**: Tiny eared

**oligantha**: Few-flowered

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Chatham Island plants tend to be much larger than those seen on the other New Zealand islands.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

## 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.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Microtis oligantha* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/microtis-oligantha/> (Date website was queried)

**MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/microtis-oligantha/>