

Orthoceras novae-zeelandiae

COMMON NAMES

horned orchid

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, usually solitary, glabrous, perennial tuberous herb. Plant at flowering up to 900 mm tall. **Tuber** up to 50 × 10 mm ovoid, ovoid-ellipsoid. **Stem** fleshy dark green, red-green, to brown-green, stiffly erect, rather wiry, axis of raceme usually flexuous. **Leaves** fleshy, suberect to spreading, 10–20 × 3–6 mm, dark green, dark red-green to brown-green, basal third closely sheathing, linear-lanceolate to linear, channelled, apex acute. **Inflorescence** racemose up to 200 mm long, 2–12-flowered.

Flowers more or less equidistant subtended by closely sheathing leaf-like bracts. **Perianth** colour variable, mostly green or red-green, sometimes greenish-yellow. **Dorsal sepal** uppermost, 10–15 × 9–14 mm, very broad, and arched over column, distinctly cucullate and deeply concave, subacute; lateral sepals 20–50 mm long, 0.5 mm diameter, narrow-linear, semi-terete, channelled, erect to divergent. **Petals** very short, narrow-oblong, flat, apex mostly notched, occasionally entire, more or less hidden under dorsal sepal. **Labellum** spreading, deflexed, firmly fleshy to almost coriaceous, green, red-green, yellow or black, trilobed, margins smooth, lateral lobes broad, oblique; mid-lobe larger, ovate; median callus yellow, restricted to near base, shortly conical with a thickened inturred, rounded apex, base of mid-lobe usually bearing two small calli. **Column** short, column-wings present as two lateral, linear processes, more or less papillose, almost as long as anther. **Anther** dorsal, taller than stigma, pollinia ill-defined, pollen granular. **Stigma** disc-shaped; rostellum prominent, acute.

SIMILAR TAXA

None.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island (mainly westerly and recorded as far south as Hokitika).

HABITAT

Coastal to lower montane (up to 800 m a.s.l.). Usually in very sunny sites on open, free draining soils or clay banks with little associated taller vegetation. Often found in urban areas on mostly bare roadside cuttings.

GENUS

Orthoceras



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/02/2017, Licence: CC BY.



Tararua Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/02/2008, Licence: CC BY.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Orthoceras novae-zeelandiae (A.Rich.) M.A.Clem., D.Jones et Molloy

SYNONYMS

Diuris novae-zeelandiae A.Rich., *Orthoceras caput-serpentis* Colenso, *Orthoceras rubrum* Colenso, *Orthoceras solandri* Lindl., *Orthoceras strictum* f. *viride* Hatch

TAXONOMIC NOTES

The distinction between *O. novae-zeelandiae* and *O. strictum* R.Br. seems very slight and dubious. *Orthoceras strictum* is said to differ by its longer floral bract and more narrowly pointed labellum. Similar plants have been found in New Zealand, and there is often a gradation between broad and more narrowly pointed labellum apices present within populations.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

July–March

FRUITING

November–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a sunny, free draining soil. Excellent in pots. Should not be removed from the wild.

ETYMOLOGY

orthoceras: Straight horn

novae-zeelandiae: Of New Zealand

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

ORTNOV

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42, 44

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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, PF 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.

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.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/orthoceras-novae-zeelandiae/>

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