

Pterostylis micromega

COMMON NAMES

swamp greenhood

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPT, EF, PF, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Orchid 150–380 mm tall. **Stem** smooth, lower internodes short, becoming progressively longer toward apex. **Basal leaves** usually in a somewhat loose rosette, though when in exposed conditions then a compact rosette; petiole 5–10 mm; lamina 35–50 mm, pale green to grey-green, broad-elliptic, subacute, margins often but not always finely undulate. **Upper leaves** sessile, ovate to narrowly ovate, channelled, and weakly keeled, becoming sheathing near flower, uppermost often reaching or just overtopping flower. **Flower** conspicuous, solitary, erect, perianth white or cream. **Dorsal sepal** green, 25–40 mm, arcuate, apex acuminate to shortly caudate, ascending to decurved. **Lateral sepals** green and white striped at base, diverging at a narrow angle, apex caudate, overtopping galea. **Petals** white, shorter than dorsal sepal, acuminate. **Labellum** red-brown, narrow-triangular, arched, markedly protruding, apex narrowly obtuse. **Column** much shorter than labellum; stigma narrow-oblong, flat.

SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive greenhood of wetland habitats whose broad-elliptic leaves usually arranged in a loose rosette, and usually with finely undulating almost crisped margins, and rather large, erect, whitish flower with long tapering, arcuate dorsal sepal immediately separate this greenhood from the other New Zealand *Pterostylis* species.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (once known from Kaitaia to Wellington, the species is still present in the Huntly Basin, (Waikato), Volcanic Plateau, near Wanganui and in the Wairarapa), South Island (a plant was also known until recently from Knuckle Hill, North-west Nelson but it appears to have died out naturally), Chatham Islands (last reliably recorded in the late 1800s). This is one of a number of orchids that have successfully colonised habitats now dominated by exotic species. For example several populations in Waikato have been discovered thriving within the moss mounds developed under grey willow (*Salix cinerea*).

HABITAT

Coastal, lowland to subalpine (0–1000 m a.s.l.). A plant of bogs, fens and swamps, ranging from acidic to eutrophic. It often forms colonies of 5–30 plants, ranging from large-leaved non-flowering juveniles through to flowering adults. It can be found growing under willows (*Salix* spp.).



Opuatia Wetland, January 1991. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.



Opuatia Wetlands. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Date taken: 01/12/1990, Licence: All rights reserved.

THREATS

Drainage of habitat; habitat invasion by weeds (in the Waikato royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) seems to be the main weed threat); unrestricted wetland access by stock, and wild animals such as deer, pigs, and possums have proved to be a problem at some sites. Nevertheless this species requires some habitat disturbance to thrive, and soon succumbs if its habitat becomes too densely vegetated.

GENUS

Pterostylis

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Pterostylis micromega Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

Pterostylis polyphylla Colenso, Pterostylis furcata var. micromega (Hook.f.) Hatch

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November–February

FRUITING

November–March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild. Basic orchid mix consists of 2 parts medium coarse sand, ideally clean river sand; 2 parts soil, humus or leaf-mould; 1 part weathered sawdust or rotting wood; 1 part granulated bark. For *Pterostylis* shade of 50% and pots kept evenly moist.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

pterostylis: Winged column

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

PTEMIC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP, EF, RR

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP, EF

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP, EF

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange P, Rolfe J, St George I, Sawyer J. 2007. Wild orchids of the lower North Island. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 194 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared from NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 October 2003. Description subsequently published in de Lange et al. (2007).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pterostylis-micromega/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pterostylis-micromega/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026