

Pterostylis tanypoda

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPR, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Somewhat fleshy, glaucescent, inconspicuous orchid 20–100 mm tall when flowering. **Stem** fleshy, hidden by numerous leafy bracts. **Rosette leaves** numerous, 5–15 × 5–12 mm; bluish-green to glaucous (rarely yellow-green), ovate, leaf tapering gradually to a broadly winged petiole; cauline leaves similar but smaller. **Inflorescence** a compact raceme of 1–7 flowers, each partially enclosed within a sheathing floral bract; perianth bluish-green with pale stripes. **Dorsal sepal** 5–10 mm, broad, apiculate. **Lateral sepals** slightly shorter, almost completely fused into a flat lamina; this apically bidentate, and strongly deflexed in fully opened flower. **Petals** just shorter than dorsal sepal, the anterior margin smooth. **Labellum** short, broad, obtuse, prolonged backwards into a smoothly rounded appendage surmounted by a thick, rather prominent, forward jutting median knob. **Column** short, broad; wings broader than long, ciliate over most of their free margins; stigma oblong.

SIMILAR TAXA

Could only be confused with *P. tristis* Colenso from which it differs in its glaucescent rather than brownish-green foliage and blue-green to green rather than brownish-green flowers. In *P. tristis* the labellum base possesses a backward projecting decurved appendage, while in *P. tanypoda* the labellum is even more strongly deflexed and it is always surmounted with a prominent, smooth forward-pointing knob. While *P. tristis* can occasionally be glaucescent, *P. tanypoda* is never brown-green. The two species may grow together.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (east of the main divide from Marlborough to Southland).

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine, usually in intermontane basins, on river terraces or on low relief foothills, amongst tussock grasses, in grey scrub or in shingle. Sometimes found in grassland dominated by exotic species.

THREATS

An apparently naturally uncommon biologically sparse species. However, its preferred habitat of open, short tussock grassland has been extensively modified and it very probably has declined in the past. The problem is one cannot quantify this. Furthermore, this species is easily overlooked and so its exact distribution and abundance remains unclear.

GENUS

Pterostylis



Hakaterere Basin, Mid Canterbury. Photographer: Warren Jowett, Date taken: 15/01/2009, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Hymenochilus tanypodus. Photographer: Eric Scanlen, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Pterostylis tanypoda D.L.Jones, Molloy et M.A.Clem.

SYNONYMS

Hymenochilus tanypodus (D.L.Jones, Molloy et M.A. Clem.) D.L.Jones, M.A.Clem. et Molloy

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Jane et al. (2010) following a thorough rDNA (ITS) based analysis of the segregate genera erected for *Pterostylis* R.Br. by Szlachekto (2001) and Jones et al. (2002) found no support to continue their recognition. This view is followed here.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–January

FRUITING

November–April

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild

ETYMOLOGY

pterostylis: Winged column

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

PTETAN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 54

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, EF, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, EF, Sp

2009 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP, EF

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, PF, Sp 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

- Janes JK, Duretto MF. 2010. A new classification for subtribe Pterostylidinae (Orchidaceae), reaffirming *Pterostylis* in the broad sense. *Australian Systematic Botany* 23: 260–269. <https://doi.org/10.1071/SB09052>.
- Jones DL, Molloy BPJ, Clements MA. 1997. Six new species of *Pterostylis* R.Br. (Orchidaceae) from New Zealand. *The Orchadian* 12: 266–281.
- Jones DL, Clements MA, Molloy BPJ. 2002. A Synopsis of the Subtribe *Pterostylidinae*. *Australian Orchid Research* 4: 129–146.
- Szlachekto, D.L. 2001: Genera et Species Orchidalium 1. *Polish Botanical Journal* 46(1): 11–26.
- 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

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (14 April 2007). Description based on Jones et al. (1997) - as *Pterostylis tanypodus*

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026