

# Pterostylis trullifolia

## COMMON NAMES

trowel-leaved orchid

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, colony forming, perennial herb. Plants at flowering up to 320 mm tall. **Stem** green or reddish-green, slender, terete, mostly smooth, sometimes with the upper internodes minutely rugose; internodes usually > leaves. **Petiolate leaves** in a compact rosette at base of flowering stem; petiole distinct up to 10 mm long (usually less) not winged; leaf lamina 5–10 × 5–10 mm, dark green to green or reddish-green, broad-ovate to orbicular-cordate, apex acute to subacute, veins raised on upper leaf surface imparting a distinctly rugose, bullate-alveolate (embossed) texture. **Cauline leaves** 2–8, 5–20 × 2–5 mm, dark green, green to reddish-green, lowermost shortly petiolate and more or less trowel-shaped, grading into sessile, linear-lanceolate leaves, uppermost rarely overtopping ovary. **Flower** 1–(2) erect, green and white striped rarely tinged with red. **Dorsal sepal** 10–15 mm tall, apex acuminate, more or less horizontal; lateral sepals diverging at a wide angle forming a U or wide W shape when viewed from the front, sinus abruptly and prominently jugate in side view, tips long-caudate and much overtopping galea. **Petals** almost as long as dorsal sepal, with only a narrow marginal strip exposed. **Labellum** narrow-triangular, arched and protruding, apex subacute. **Column** shorter than labellum; stigma elliptic, slightly prominent.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Pterostylis alobula* from which it differs by its distinctly embossed rosette leaves, more slender, taller habit, smaller often red-tinged flowers, and by the more slender apex of the labellum which lacks the inverted U typical of *P. alobula*.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands, North Island, South Island (to about Canterbury and north Westland).

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 1100 m a.s.l.). Usually on the forest floor in sparse leaf litter, open clay pans under scrub or amongst mosses in semi-shaded successional forest. Occasional invades rough pasture and lawns bordering forest remnants. Often found growing with *Pterostylis alobula*.

## GENUS

Pterostylis



The distinctive 'jug spout' lip at the base of the opening into the flower. Upper Hutt.

Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 30/05/2007, Licence: CC BY.



The distinctive alveolate venation of the rosette leaves. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt.

Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 31/05/2015, Licence: CC BY.

## FAMILY

Orchidaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Pterostylis trullifolia* Hook.f.

## SYNONYMS

*Pterostylis rubella* Colenso; *Pterostylis trullifolia* var. *gracilis* Cheeseman; *Diplodium trullifolium* (Hook.f.) D.L.Jones, Molloy et M.A.Clem.

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Janes 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

May–September

## FRUITING

July–January

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Moderately easy to grow, especially in a pot. 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

PTETRU

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 50

## 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 Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT 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

- 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, Clements MA, Molloy BPJ. 2002. A Synopsis of the Subtribe *Pterostylidinae*. *Australian Orchid Research* 4: 129–146.
- Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.
- Szlachekto, D.L. 2001: Genera et Species Orchidaliium 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

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## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026