

Thelymitra malvina

COMMON NAME

mauve sun orchid

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Thelymitra malvina M.A.Clem., D.L.Jones et Molloy

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 26

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: EF, SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: SO

2004 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North Island where known locally from the North Cape area, Ahipara Gumfields, Kaimaumu and Lake Ohia wetlands near Kaitaia and from Ngawha Springs near Kaikohe. Common in eastern Australia in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

HABITAT

Open ground within peat bogs and wetlands, nearly always found in association with rotting kauri (*Agathis australis* (D.Don) Lindl.) logs.



A flowering plant at Lake Ohia, October 1990.
Photographer: G.M. Crowcroft



Kaimaumu 5/11/95, column only.
Photographer: Eric Scanlen

FEATURES

Glabrous, terrestrial orchid. Tubers ovoid 10-30 x 5-12 mm, fleshy, pinkish-grey. Leaf linear to linear-lanceolate, 100-350 x 5-20 mm, light to dark green with a purple base, erect, canaliculate, fleshy, abaxial surface ribbed, sheathing at base, apex acute. Inflorescence 0.25-0.75(-0.9) m tall, 1.5-5.0 mm diameter, stout, fleshy, straight, green to purple-green. Sterile bracts (2-)3, linear to linear-lanceolate, 20-100 x 4-11 mm, closely sheathing, acute to acuminate, green or purple-green, upper bract usually free with base usually only half encircling the scape. Fertile bracts 8-30 x 3-6 mm, green or purple-green, ovate-acuminate to obovate-acuminate, sheathing the pedicels. Pedicels 5-15 mm long, slender. Ovary cylindrical to narrow-obovoid, 5-12 x 2-4 mm. Flowers 3-25, 18-32 mm diameter, slate blue to mauve inside, sepals greenish outside, opening readily in warm weather. Perianth segments 8-16 x 3-7 mm, concave, acute, shortly apiculate; dorsal sepal elliptic to lanceolate; lateral sepals elliptic to lanceolate, asymmetric; petals ovate to lanceolate; labellum elliptic to linear-lanceolate, often narrower than other segments. Column erect, 6-7.5 x 2.5-3.7 mm, mauve; post-anther lobe cucullate, 2-4 x 1.5-2.5 mm, tubular, inflated, compressed dorsally, curved gently, dark reddish brown, apex shallowly bilobed, lobes toothed, orifice small, yellow; post-anther lobe extension 0.6-0.2 mm; auxiliary lobes absent; lateral lobes converging 1-1.5 mm long, digitiform, obliquely erect, each with a more or less terminal, dense, broom of mauve or pink cilia 1-1.5 mm long. Anther inserted near middle of column, ovoid, 2.5-3.5 x 1.2-2.2 mm, the connective prolonged into a 0.5-1.0 mm long beak. Stigma at base of column, 1.8-2.6 x 1.5-2.5 mm, ovate-quadrangle. Capsules 12-20 x 4-6 mm, obovoid, erect, ribbed.

SIMILAR TAXA

Thelymitra malvina has no close relatives in New Zealand. The tall stout but slender scape and mauve to slate blue flowers with mauve to pink mop-like cilia tufts on the lateral lobes are very distinctive. In New Zealand *Thelymitra malvina* usually has > 5 flowers per scape and these characteristically all open at the same time. Its nearest relative is the Australian endemic *T. atronitida* Jeanes from which it differs by the usually three rather than two sterile bracts, larger mostly insect-pollinated rather than autogamous flowers, dark reddish brown rather than glossy black post anther lobes, and mauve or pink rather than white lateral lobe cilia.

FLOWERING

(September-) October (-November)

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

FRUITING

October - January

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Not in cultivation. A strongly mycorrhizal species which should not be removed from the wild

THREATS

Plant collectors are a constant problem because it is a conspicuous orchid with very attractive flowers. It is threatened at many sites by invasive weeds, changes to the local water table, and removal of swamp kauri logs for furniture making. However, it is also reasonably secure at several sites and indications are that it is actively spreading in suitable habitats throughout Northland

ETYMOLOGY

thelymitra: Woman's hat

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. Description subsequently published in Rolfe & de Lange (2010). See also Jeanes (2004).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Jeanes, J. 2004: A revision of the *Thelymitra pauciflora* R.Br. (Orchidaceae) complex in Australia. *Muelleria* 19: 19-79.
- Rolfe, J.R.; de Lange, P.J. 2010: Illustrated guide to New Zealand sun orchids, *Thelymitra* (Orchidaceae). Jeremy Rolfe, Wellington.

CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/thelymitra-malvina/>