

# Thelymitra nervosa

## COMMON NAMES

spotted sun orchid, sun orchid

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

## FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, tuberous, glabrous, spring to summer-green perennial herb, growing solitary or in colonies of 4–10 plants arising through vegetative extension. Plant at flowering up to 600 mm tall. **Leaf** broad, channelled and deeply keeled, (60)–90–(260) × (8)–12–(20) mm. **Bracts** 1–2–(3), foliaceous, closely-sheathing, fleshy, of similar colour to stem and leaf.

**Inflorescence** a (1)–10-flowered raceme. **Flowers** up to 18 mm diameter, spreading, rarely widely spreading, segments dark to pale blue, mauve, pink or white usually with darker blue spotted petals, sometimes without spots. **Sepals and petals** alike, ovate-oblong, subacute more or less concave (cupped) resulting in a rounded appearance to the flower.

**Labellum** slightly spathulate. **Column** erect, 3–6 mm tall, usually pale pink grading to dark purple near post-anther lobe; post-anther lobe extending well above anther-tip, initially dark purple and tuberculate above middle, margin yellow, narrowly hippocrepiform, somewhat membranous with a finely denticulate apex, weakly cucullate; column-arms terete to plano-convex in cross section; cilia copious, somewhat coarse, arising from sides, back and top of arm and mostly standing higher than post-anther lobe. **Anther** not thickened or incurved.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from other New Zealand *Thelymitra* by the rounded and cupped flower segments; spotted (not striped) petals; more or less terete (in cross-section) column arms furnished with copious white cilia; horse-shoe shaped, tuberculate and apically yellow post-anther lobe.

## DISTRIBUTION

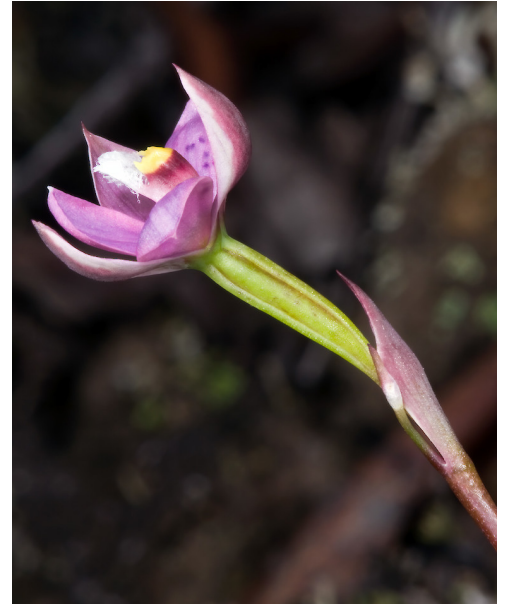
Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands.

## HABITAT

Lowland to alpine (up to 1400 m a.s.l.). Mostly montane in northern part of range, extending to lowland area in the southern South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura and Chatham Islands. In well lighted places within tall forest, scrub, tussock grassland or on more or less bare lava fields (Tongariro National Park).

## GENUS

*Thelymitra*



Pinehaven, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 08/11/2008, Licence: CC BY.



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## FAMILY

Orchidaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Thelymitra nervosa* Colenso

## SYNONYMS

*Thelymitra decora* Cheeseman

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–February

## FRUITING

November–April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easily grown in a sunny, well drained site. Although easily cultivated, like all orchids it should not be removed from the wild.

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## ETYMOLOGY

**thelymitra:** Woman's hat

**nervosa:** With conspicuous veins

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

THENER

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 54

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened [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

Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

Rolfe JR, de Lange PJ. 2010. Illustrated guide to New Zealand sun orchids, *Thelymitra* (Orchidaceae). Jeremy Rolfe, Wellington, NZ. 57 p.

## ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

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## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026