

# Microtis parviflora

## COMMON NAMES

onion-leaved orchid

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, glabrous, colony forming, fleshy, tuberous bright green to yellow-green perennial herb. Plants at flowering 100–400–(700) mm tall.

**Tubers** globose to ovoid. **Stem** erect, terete. **Leaf** solitary, usually overtopping inflorescence, bright green to yellow-green, closely sheathing stem for much of length, linear-terete, hollow, 400 × 8 mm long. **Inflorescence** a raceme up to 300 × 10 mm. **Flowers** 10–80, up to 3 mm diameter, shortly-stalked and closely spaced, more or less overlapping. **Perianth** green to yellow-green, segments up to 2.2 mm long, widely spreading, thick and fleshy. **Dorsal sepal** 1.5–2.0 mm long, ovate, erect or projecting forwards, cucullate, concave, column-embracing, acute, apex shortly recurved, smaller than ovary at flowering; lateral sepals shorter and narrower, subacute, strongly deflexed, usually curled under. **Petals** shorter still, narrowly obtuse, erect, usually partially hidden under dorsal sepal. **Labellum** sessile, tongue-like, up to 2 mm long, green or yellow-green, more or less triangular-cordate, decurved but more less slightly projecting forwards, broader at base narrowing to an obtuse apex terminated by a down-turned apiculus; margin entire to sinuate (with marginal cells occasionally, slightly enlarged), smooth; anterior callus usually present, somewhat variable in size; basal calli prominent, dark green, ovate, paired and parallel, surrounding a distinct small pouched bulge on the under side of the labellum. **Column** short, obtuse, base of column wider than stigma, otherwise narrowing behind stigma, wings membranous throughout. **Anther** terminal, erect, situated above stigma, hemispherical, pollinia spheroidal, pollen granular. **Stigma** broadly ovate; rostellum ovate. **Capsules** broadly ovoid, ovoid-ellipsoid, brown when ripe.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from *M. unifolia* (G.Forst.) Reichb.f. and *M. oligantha* L.B.Moore by the more or less triangular labellum, which narrows abruptly to a down-turned apiculate tip, has a pouched base and an almost entire or smooth margin.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands, Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands, North Island (scarce south of Waikato and Bay of Plenty), South Island (Marlborough Sounds, North-west Nelson and the northern West Coast. Probably also in Australia.



Close up of flowers at various angles. Tokaanu, Central North Island. Photographer: Matt Ward, Date taken: 28/11/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Flowers, with an ant present for scale. Tokaanu, Central North Island. Photographer: Matt Ward, Date taken: 28/12/2022, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## HABITAT

Coastal to lowland. Favours open clay pans, sand dune hollows, and other areas of exposed soil with little overhead vegetation. Common in gumland scrub, on the margins of peat bogs, in seral forest and within geothermal fields.

## GENUS

Microtis

## FAMILY

Orchidaceae

## AUTHORITY

Microtis parviflora R.Br.

## SYNONYMS

None

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

New Zealand plants referred to *M. parviflora* are possibly distinct and may warrant separate taxonomic recognition. It is not clear if they are endemic, and at this stage NZPCN has assumed that they are not.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

September–March

## FRUITING

December–May

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a sunny position. Should not be removed from the wild. Often invades urban lawns in places adjacent to gum land scrub (such as in western Auckland).

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

## ETYMOLOGY

**microtis**: Tiny eared

**parviflora**: From the Latin parvus 'small, puny' and flores 'flowers', meaning small-flowered.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

MICPAR

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR, SO 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

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

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/microtis-parviflora/>

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026