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.

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.

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

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
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 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 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 adapted from Moore & 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/pterostylis-trullifolia/

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25 August 2026