

Corybas cryptanthus

COMMON NAME

hidden spider orchid, icky

SYNONYMS

Corybas saprophyticus Hatch; *Corysanthes cryptantha* (Hatch) Szlach.; *Molloybas cryptanthus* (Hatch) D.L.Jones et M.A.Clem.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Corybas cryptanthus Hatch

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 34

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

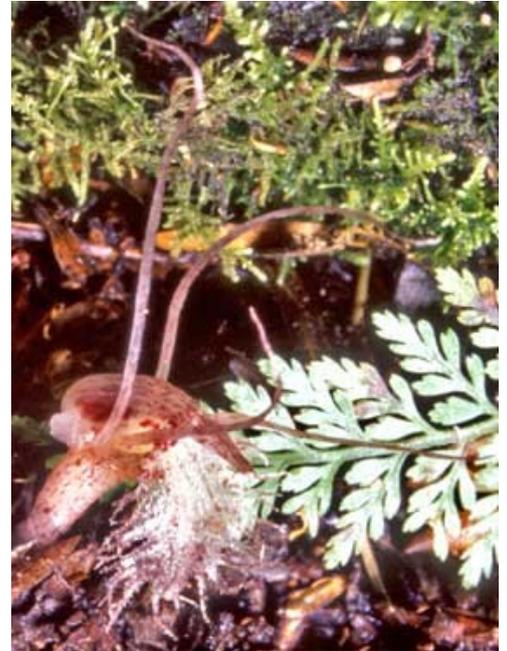
2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands, North Island, South Island.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. In dense shrublands and tall forest. Confined to deep, partially decomposed leaf litter where it is easily overlooked except when fruiting. Current records suggest a preference for growing under kānuka (*Kunzea* spp.) and Nothofagaceae. It often grows with *Corybas cheesemanii* (Hook.f. ex Kirk) Kuntze.



Omoana on 3/12/97. Photographer: Eric Scanlen, Licence: CC BY-NC.



The rare alba form, Omoana 3/9/05. Photographer: Eric Scanlen, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Saprophytic, rhizomatous, subterranean, orchid lacking chlorophyll and flowering usually buried within leaf litter, only rarely with flowers exposed. Fruiting stem greatly elongated, exposed and held well above the ground. Rhizomes, stems, and flowers hyaline white, usually flecked with red, purple or brown, rarely without any colour. **Tubers** scarcely evident, minute, globose, partially obscured by leaf-scales. **Rhizomes** horizontal, extensive, succulent, without roots, frequently and laxly branched, buried within leaf mould and litter, up to 1 mm diameter and 100–120 mm long. **Leaves** reduced to minute deltoid scales spaced at about 10 mm intervals along rhizome, the one at the base of the flower stem usually broadly ovate and larger. **Flowers** solitary. **Floral bract** > to » ovary. **Perianth** usually hyaline white to pale pink, more or less streaked with red or purple, sometimes completely white. **Dorsal sepal** 10–14 mm long, narrow-lanceolate, acuminate; lateral sepals longer than dorsal sepal and labellum, filiform, often protruding from leaf litter. **Petals** similar to lateral sepals but distinctly shorter. **Labellum** up to 15 mm long, auriculate at base, the margins meeting behind the column and touching for about half the labellum length, central portion much thickened and papillose, the distal portion greatly expanded, more or less deflexed, usually not abruptly but sometimes so, with the free margin upturned, coarsely and abundantly lacinate, laciniae sometimes branched, margins finely ciliate. **Fruiting capsule** ovoid, hyaline, flecked with red or purple; terminal on a greatly expanded, erect stem up to 280 mm tall; capsule initially down-turned, at maturity either horizontal or erect.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

SIMILAR TAXA

Extremely distinctive—the saprophytic, subterranean growth habit, succulent, wide-spreading and branching rhizome, absence of chlorophyll, greatly reduced scale-like leaves and minute tubers, and the distinctive translucent almost crystalline flower with the coarsely toothed labellum apex readily separate this species from all other indigenous orchids. Because of its growth habit this species is easily overlooked, and it is most often found when in fruit. Because it often grows in the same habitats as *Corybas cheesemanii* which may also have its leaves buried within leaf litter it is easily overlooked. From *C. cheesemanii* it is easily distinguished by the absence of chlorotic leaves, and by the fruiting capsule which when it emerges is down-turned not erect, and at maturity is mostly held horizontally. The fruiting stem of *Corybas cryptanthus* is translucent-hyaline and usually red or purple flecked, that of *Corybas cheesemanii* is white and opaque.

FLOWERING

June–October

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

October–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

As a saprophytic species this orchid is virtually impossible to cultivate. It should not be removed from the wild.

THREATS

No apparent threats.

ETYMOLOGY

corybas: Helmet flower

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Considerable research is underway to investigate the validity of the segregate genera split from *Corybas* R.Br. by Clements et al. (2002). Whilst much of that work has yet to be published, on advice from Australian Orchidologists Peter Weston and Stephen Hopper (pers. comm., July 2011, November 2014), all of the segregate genera recognised for New Zealand by Jones et al. (2002) are returned to *Corybas* (see also Garnock-Jones 2014; Lyon 2014).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange (1 January 2005). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Garnock-Jones PJ. 2014: Evidence-based review of the taxonomic status of New Zealand's endemic seed plant genera. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 52(2): 163–212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2014.902854>.
- Jones DL, Clements MA, Sharma IK, Mackenzie AM, Molloy BPJ. 2002. Nomenclatural notes arising from studies into the Tribe *Diurideae* (Orchidaceae). *The Orchadian* 13(10): 437–468.
<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/310769#page/2/mode/1up>.
- Irwin JB. 1954. *Corybas saprophyticus*. *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin* 27: 22–23.
- Lyon SP. 2014. Molecular systematics, biogeography, and mycorrhizal associations in the Acianthinae (Orchidaceae), with a focus on the genus *Corybas*. PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.
<https://asset.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/UAXO3VHO6P7EH8Y/R/file-19145.pdf>.
- Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.
- Whitaker T. 1957. *Corybas cryptanthus* (saprophyticus). *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin* 29: 3.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/corybas-cryptanthus/>