

Thelymitra aemula

COMMON NAME

gumland sun orchid

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Thelymitra aemula Cheeseman

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

NVS CODE

THEAEM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Te Paki to about the northern Waikato).

HABITAT

Favouring open clay pans, gumland scrub, or sparsely vegetated slopes in site where there once was, or still is kauri (*Agathis australis* (D.Don) Lindl.) forest. It may also colonise grassy verges along roadsides traversing kauri forest remnants and gumland scrub. This species responds well to periodic burning provided of course the former habitat had few or no fire-adapted weed species.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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




Kennedy Bay. November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Lake Ohia. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 30/10/2008, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, tuberous, robust, glabrous, late spring to early summer–green perennial herb, usually solitary or growing in small, diffuse colonies of 3–5 plants. Plants at flower up to 800 mm tall. **Stem** robust, fleshy, erect 2.5–3.5 mm diameter, dark reddish green. **Leaf** firmly fleshy to subcoriaceous, rather thick, erect to suberect, 80–260 × 3.5–10.0 mm, dark green, basally reddish, linear-lanceolate, channelled, prominently ridged, undersides smooth. **Inflorescence** a 3–10–(22)-flowered raceme. **Bracts** 2–(3), prominent, rather robust, short, sheathing, with divergent tips, dark reddish green. **Ovary** prominent, robust. **Flower** 10–18 mm diameter, closely spaced, segments pale mauve to dark sky blue. **Sepals and petals** subsimilar, oblong to ovate-oblong, apex obtuse or subacute. **Labellum** oblong-obovate. **Column** erect 4.8–5.6 mm tall, basally white grading through mauve to dark mauve, violet, or banded brown/dark violet near apex, apex yellow; post-anther lobe taller than anther, erect, smooth or minutely tuberculate on the back, margins denticulate, slightly recurved, yellow; side lobe scarcely evident, forward pointing, fleshy, yellow; column-arms laterally flattened, narrow, erect and upcurved (rarely horizontal), upper  fringed with numerous, thin, brush-like white cilia; the arms bent inwards such that the cilia meet above anther apex. **Anther** broadly ovoid, green, with a prominent long, narrowly tapered, acute apex. **Stigma** with a short, broad rostellum.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Thelymitra ixioides* Sw., and *T. tholiformis* Molloy et Hatch, species with which it often grows. It differs from *T. ixioides* by its smooth rather than finely rugose leaf undersides; consistently unspotted flowers; yellow, denticulate, rather than purple, orange or reddish jagged post anther lobe furnished with numerous finger-like calli; and low forward pointing yellow, rather than high, erect, fleshy jagged purple or reddish yellow side lobes. From *T. tholiformis* it differs by its erect, non-hooded rather than tall, domed post anther lobe; presence of side lobes; and column arms bearing, thin brush-like rather than dense, globose cilia.

FLOWERING

November–February

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

FRUITING

December–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be moved from the wild as it is strongly mycorrhizal and soon dies if moved from its habit.

ETYMOLOGY

thelymitra: Woman's hat

aemula: From the Latin aemula 'rival'

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

TAXONOMIC NOTES

This species was included by Moore & Edgar (1970) in *Thelymitra ixioides*.

ATTRIBUTION

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

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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