

Thelymitra ixioides

COMMON NAME

spotted sun orchid

SYNONYMS

Thelymitra ixioides var. *typica* Hatch, *Thelymitra juncifolia* Lindl.,
Thelymitra lilacina F.Muel. ex Lindl., *Thelymitra iridioides* Seib. ex Benth.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Thelymitra ixioides Sw.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

NVS CODE

THEIXI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: S?O, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island, South Island. Also Australia.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 900 m a.s.l.). In open ground, especially clay pans within gumland scrub but also colonising roadside banks, road gravel, stable dune slacks, and well-lit but sparsely vegetated ground under taller scrub and forest. Sometimes in beech (*Nothofagaceae*) forest or on the margins of montane streams. Rarely in peat bogs.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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



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



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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, tuberous, glabrous, spring to summer-green perennial herb, either solitary or in small colonies of 2–4 plants. Plant at flower up to 700 mm tall. **Leaf** solitary, fleshy, deeply channelled and more or less longitudinally ribbed, 50–120 mm long, reddish-green to almost silvery reddish-green near base otherwise yellow-green to dark green, linear-lanceolate, base closely sheathing, undersides finely rugose. **Flowering stem** stiffly erect, wiry, reddish green to silvery-green. **Bracts** 1–2–(3), foliaceous, closely-sheathing, fleshy, bases dark reddish-green to silvery reddish-green otherwise green to yellow-green. **Raceme** bearing (1)–5–(20) flowers (usually much fewer). **Flowers** 11–18 mm diameter, blue, segments widely spreading, dorsal sepal and petals with darker blue or purple spots. **Sepals and petals** very broad. **Labellum** distinctly rounded. **Column** up to 5 mm long, erect, bluish grading to dark purple near apex; column arms flattened, cilia white, largely marginal, column arms projecting from anterior margin of the side lobule, cilia white or mauve; post anther lobe slightly taller than anther, erect, not cucullate, the back and apex bearing numerous violet or yellow finger-like calli (the tallest yellow or orange); side lobules distinct, usually taller, yellow, margins mostly lacinate.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to native orchids of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

The reddish-green to silvery reddish-green, deeply ribbed leaves with finely rugose undersides, and distinctive blue flowers with darker blue or purple spots on the dorsal sepal and petals, and the non hooded, post anther lobe bearing conspicuous yellow or orange finger like calli immediately separate this species from any other *Thelymitra* in New Zealand. New Zealand plants are self pollinating and Australian plants insect-pollinated.

FLOWERING

September–December

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

FRUITING

November–March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild.

THREATS

No apparent threats but not common. This species rarely occurs in any abundance at any particular site and is very vulnerable to roadworks, animal browse, loss through succession to taller forest and because it has attractive flowers that make it a target of plant collectors.

ETYMOLOGY

thelymitra: Woman's hat

ixioides: Like an ixia

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

New Zealand plants differ from those in Australian (from where it was first described by their autogamous rather than entomophilous reproductive biology). For this reason New Zealand plants are usually regarded as an unnamed entity allied to *T. ixioides*. Research into the taxonomic status of the New Zealand plant is in progress.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

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.

MORE INFORMATION

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