

Thelymitra nervosa

COMMON NAME

spotted sun orchid, sun orchid

SYNONYMS

Thelymitra decora Cheeseman

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Thelymitra nervosa Colenso

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

NVS CODE

THENER

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 54

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Lowland to alpine (up to 1400 m a.s.l.). Mostly montane in northern part of range, extending to lowland area in the southern South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura and Chatham Islands. In well lighted places within tall forest, scrub, tussock grassland or on more or less bare lava fields (Tongariro National Park).



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



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial, tuberous, glabrous, spring to summer-green perennial herb, growing solitary or in colonies of 4–10 plants arising through vegetative extension. Plant at flowering up to 600 mm tall. **Leaf** broad, channelled and deeply keeled, (60)–90–(260) × (8)–12–(20) mm. **Bracts** 1–2–(3), foliaceous, closely-sheathing, fleshy, of similar colour to stem and leaf. **Inflorescence** a (1)–10-flowered raceme. **Flowers** up to 18 mm diameter, spreading, rarely widely spreading, segments dark to pale blue, mauve, pink or white usually with darker blue spotted petals, sometimes without spots. **Sepals and petals** alike, ovate-oblong, subacute more or less concave (cupped) resulting in a rounded appearance to the flower. **Labellum** slightly spathulate. **Column** erect, 3–6 mm tall, usually pale pink grading to dark purple near post-anther lobe; post-anther lobe extending well above anther-tip, initially dark purple and tuberculate above middle, margin yellow, narrowly hippocrepiform, somewhat membranous with a finely denticulate apex, weakly cucullate; column-arms terete to plano-convex in cross section; cilia copious, somewhat coarse, arising from sides, back and top of arm and mostly standing higher than post-anther lobe. **Anther** not thickened or incurved.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from other New Zealand *Thelymitra* by the rounded and cupped flower segments; spotted (not striped) petals; more or less terete (in cross-section) column arms furnished with copious white cilia; horse-shoe shaped, tuberculate and apically yellow post-anther lobe.

FLOWERING

October–February

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

FRUITING

November–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easily grown in a sunny, well drained site. Although easily cultivated, like all orchids it should not be removed from the wild.

ETYMOLOGY

thelymitra: Woman's hat

nervosa: With conspicuous veins

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

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-nervosa/>