

Earina autumnalis

COMMON NAME

Easter orchid, raupeka

SYNONYMS

Epidendrum autumnale Forst.f.; *Earina suaveolens* Lindl.; *Earina alba* Col.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Earina autumnalis (G.Forst.) Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

NVS CODE

EARAUT

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, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Epiphytic, rupestral or terrestrial. Mostly on the trunks and branches of forest trees but also on rocks, cliff faces, banks and fallen, moss covered logs.



Earina. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Epiphytic or rupestral, rhizomatous, perennial, producing numerous leafy, unbranched, long persistent, wiry, cane-like stems up to 1.5 m long. **Stems** erect if short, pendulous otherwise. **Rhizomes** extensive, much intertwined and firmly attached to substrate, fleshy, more or less spongy, initially creamy white maturing grey-white, thickly covered with sheathing scale-leaves or their weathered, fibrous remains. **Leaf-sheaths** closely imbricating, persistent, distichously arranged, 5–14 mm long, 3–4 mm diameter, cylindrical to tubular, deeply split, scarcely flattened, each overlapping with and covering the lower $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ of the leaf-sheath above, exposed surface pale grey with dark margins, weakly and diffusely maculate or not, spots if present orbicular, purple-black. Leaf-sheath junction with leaf lamina distinctly flared. **Leaves** weakly flexuose usually down-curved in upper portion; lamina persistent, disarticulating at leaf-sheath junction, weakly 1–3-nerved, 40–120 × 5–8 mm, mostly dark glossy green, broadly lanceolate, widest near base, tapering in upper third gradually to broad, subacute tip; lateral veins inconspicuous, midrib of upper lamina deeply and prominently channelled. **Inflorescence** a racemose panicle. **Panicle** up to 100 mm long, mostly stiffly erect, rather wiry; racemes numerous, arranged distichously at short intervals up the stiff central axis, each lateral stem to 10 mm long, usually bearing a few crowded, empty bracts and up to 3 sessile flowers. **Perianth** 13–16 mm diameter, opening widely (flaring), waxy white. **Sepals** elliptic, slightly keeled subacute. **Petals** slightly broader and more obtuse. **Labellum** broad and obtuse, white except for yellow base, standing erect and half enclosing the column, transversely rhomboid, not lobed; distal margins slightly thickened and recurved; base with two crescent-shaped ridges leading down to a small bright yellow or yellow-orange pit-like nectary. **Column** shorter than labellum, broadest at base, wings minute, present as small lobes about level with the stigma, pollinia clavate. **Capsules** elliptic-ovoid, ovoid, deeply, longitudinally grooved, dark green maturing grey.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to native orchids of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from *Earina aestivalis* Cheeseman and *E. mucronata* Lindl. by the virtually unspotted, more or less cylindrical leaf-sheath; usually dark green leaves, stiffly erect inflorescences, and strongly pleasantly perfumed, consistently white flowers with broad yellow-based labella.

FLOWERING

January–June

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

FRUITING

April–August

LIFE CYCLE

Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a hanging basket in standard orchid mix. Often can be strapped to a tree trunk and provided it is kept moist during the drier months it grows readily. This species does best in semi-shade. The strongly perfumed flowers are especially attractive. Should not be removed from the wild.

ETYMOLOGY

earina: Springtime

autumnalis: Autumn flowering

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. 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.

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>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Earina autumnalis* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/earina-autumnalis/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/earina-autumnalis/>