

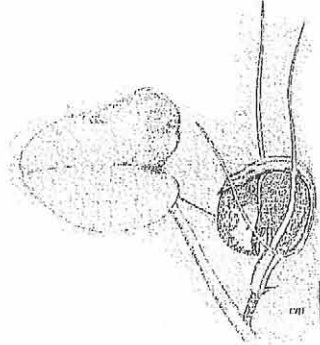
December's Plant Profile: a spider orchid - *Corybas macranthus* (Hook. f.) Reichb. f.

By Alison Knight.

Plant of the month for December 1999 has to be the very large and lush spider orchid that we found flowering halfway down the cliff right above the beach on the field trip to Cornish Head. I packed a flower in damp moss and sent it to Gael Donaghy in Nelson, and she confirmed our identification of *Corybas macranthus*.

"*Corybas macranthus* is the largest of the genus in New Zealand, liking well-lit sites, often under scrub, and forming large, loose colonies of many plants.

The stalked, green leaf is thick and fleshy, silver-backed, often bearing brownish markings along the edge; the petals are shorter than the sepals (both are much elongated), the labellum dark reddish black, the whole flower 1.5 cm across. ... It is common in New Zealand and flowers from October to January; it is predominantly insect-pollinated." Ian St George, 1999: *The Nature Guide to New Zealand Native Orchids*. (p69).



Picture from St George *et al.* (1996): *Field Guide to the New Zealand orchids*. The New Zealand Native Orchid Group, Wellington. p42.