

# Edwin Daniel Hatch (1919 – 2008)

**E**dwin Daniel (Dan) Hatch, an accountant by profession, became New Zealand's foremost orchidologist of the twentieth century. His father was born in Nicaragua, where his grandfather was vice-consul for the Mosquito Coast. Dan, the third E D Hatch, was born in London in 1919, spent the first few years of his childhood in Salisbury, and came to New Zealand with his parents in 1922. His father was familiar with the swamps of Central America, and gravitated to Laingholm as the wildest place he could find. Dan lived there, on the Manukau coast at the foot of the Waitakeres, in the midst of native bush.



## ***Danhatchia australis***

This small erect, non-green leafless orchid has pink-brown stems up to 12 cm tall, with several colourless enveloping bracts. It flowers from December to February, but the flowers rarely open fully, and it is believed to be self-pollinating. If conditions are unsuitable, the fungus-dependent rhizomes may exist underground for years without emerging. It was not discovered until the 1950s, and was first thought to be a species of the Japanese genus *Yoania*, but in 1995 was recognised as a single species New Zealand genus. It is found mainly in forest dominated by taraire and nikau in the north of the North Island, and under nikau in one area of Northwest Nelson, and is also known from one site in New South Wales, Australia.

As a child Dan was acquainted with botany – his father's friend, James Hunter, was a friend of Leonard Cockayne, and from the age of 14 Dan took a keen interest in plants. He got into orchids by chance, when he was stationed at Waiouru in the early 1940s. Ostensibly deer-stalking with friends at weekends, he constantly rode away on his army-issue bike and botanised the tussock. He found seven orchids not in Cheeseman's *Manual of the New Zealand Flora* and sent specimens to DSIR at Wellington for identification. They didn't know them either, and referred him to Herman M R Rupp in Sydney. A result of that contact was their joint paper on the trans-Tasman orchids, including a description of *Aporostylis bifolia*, which is still valid. Hatch then set out to describe all the New Zealand orchids.

He did this from 1945 to 1963 in a series of nineteen papers, illustrated mainly by his father, for the *Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand*. In his booklet *Auckland's Orchids* (1950) he did his own drawings. *Round the Year with the Orchids of Auckland*, a month-by-month account of flowering times and brief descriptions of local species, was published as an Auckland Botanical Society bulletin in 1951. In a *New Zealand Gardener* magazine article, "Native Orchids – Beautiful, Anti-Social, Uncultivable", he shared his knowledge, enthusiasm and concerns with enthusiasts less scientifically minded.

In 1987 he was honoured by an Auckland Botanical Society invitation to give the Lucy Cranwell lecture; he spoke about "The Small Green Orchid". Two orchids are named for him, elusive *Danhatchia australis*, and a sun orchid *Thelymitra hatchii*. In 1988 his contribution to the study of New Zealand orchids was recognised by his election to fellowship of the Linnean Society, and he was one of five honorary life members of the New Zealand Native Orchid Group. Inevitably he had his critics, but he also made many good and loyal friends. In a guest editorial in the *New Zealand Native Orchid Journal* on the occasion of his 80th birthday, he said that he was interested, ignorant and wanted to know. In the process of his learning, he wrote more than a hundred scientific papers, and became the major contributor to present-day knowledge of New Zealand orchids.

Dan Hatch died on 4 November 2008, in his 90th year. In November 2009 the New Zealand Native Orchid Group made its inaugural presentation of the Hatch Medal, for outstanding contributions to New Zealand orchidology