

Walburga Zeller (1946 –)

Born in Burggriesbach in Bavaria, Germany, on 22 August 1946, Walburga (Walli) Zeller, née Zech, was the daughter of Anton Zech (1889–1959) and Kreszens Zech, née Körner, (1909–1992). She was the only child of Anton Zech's second marriage, and was named after her godmother.

She grew up on a small 5-hectare farm and has fond memories of long Sunday walks with her father through the forests and meadows. His sudden death changed the living conditions of the family and thirteen-year-old Walburga and her mother had to run the family farm alone. They worked in the fields growing potatoes, corn, and grain, and tended five cows and ten to twelve pigs. These chores, coupled with the delicate health of her mother, were very time consuming, and Walli quit school when she was fourteen. At the age of fifteen, she took a position assisting the local veterinarian with work on various farms, and housekeeping.

At eighteen years old, she moved back to her mother and worked in a toy factory. As a young woman she was actively involved in Kolping, a Catholic group. She was also part of the local theatre group; she loved acting and performed in several plays. In February 1971 at a Fasching (carnival) event, she met her future husband Fritz Zeller. After their marriage, as well as taking care of their five children, she took over the administrative tasks of her husband's family stonemasonry business. A keen gardener, she liked spending time outdoors, maintaining a large vegetable garden, cultivating berry bushes, fruit trees and flowers. She also enjoyed travelling, and visited Italy, Greece, Syria, Jordan, Spain, and Egypt – her highlight was sailing along the River Nile!

Now (2016), after her second struggle with cancer, she spends her time knitting, helping with the business customer service and taking care of her husband.

Meanwhile Walli's son Andreas Zeller came to Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, as a PhD student in 2008, and graduated Doctor of Philosophy (Chemistry) in 2014. Te Papa botanist Carlos Lehnebach had received a grant to study spider orchids, and invited Andreas to conduct the scent analyses in the project he was leading. For Andreas it was an opportunity to combine his knowledge of chemistry with his lifetime interest in the natural world. However, he became so fascinated by the New Zealand orchids and their biology that his involvement extended beyond the chemistry, and he participated in field trips, pollination and taxonomy studies.

An unexpected result of the team's research was the discovery that what was previously considered one species of orchid is actually five, and although the scientists had to use genetic data to differentiate between the species, fungus gnats appeared to do it based on smell. *Corybas walliae*, one of five new spider orchid species described in their 2016 paper, "is named after Walli (Walburga) Zeller, mother of the second author of [the] article". Andreas wished she could have come to New Zealand, but her health prevented it. Naming the orchid after Walli was a way of giving her a connection with Aotearoa New Zealand.

Corybas walliae

(*Corybas*: Greek *korys* 'helmet', from the shape of the flower). Previously included with *Corybas trilobus*, this spider orchid was first described in 2016. It is a seasonal orchid, 13-34 mm tall at flowering in October to mid-November. The solitary leaf is heart-shaped, the flower mostly pale green or yellowish, occasionally with a few blotches of pink on the upper parts. Montane to subalpine, *Corybas walliae* is found in leaf litter under southern beech or kamahi forest, or growing in mossy seepages or gravelly soils between 600 and 1,150 m. The species is endemic and fairly common in the North and South islands of New Zealand.

