

Common Name:	Green-winged orchid
Scientific Name:	<i>Anacamptis morio</i>
Irish Name:	Magairlín féitheach

Standing only about 10-15cm tall, this is an absolutely exquisite member of the Orchid family and one whose distribution is sadly labelled as declining, now classed among our sixty-one Vulnerable species on the 2016 Red Data List of Vascular Plants. Belonging to this category indicates that the species is 'considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild' and that there has been a marked decline in the area of its occupancy.

Small but extremely good-looking, Green-winged Orchid bears a single spike of between five and twenty-five flowers in colours ranging from deep purple, through mauve and pink to, very occasionally, white. Each flower has a broad, three-lobed lip with dark spots running through its pale centre towards the middle of the flower. Either side of this petal are two wing-like, spreading, lateral sepals, each distinctly marked with parallel green veins, giving the flower its other common name, Green-veined Orchid. These extremely attractive flowers entice pollinators but, unlike the other species of this genus to be found in Ireland, Pyramidal Orchid or *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, they do not offer any nectar but become pollinated by an act of deception. The green, lanceolate leaves are unspotted and grow in a rosette and there are also some sheathing the stem, almost as far the flower. It is sometimes confused with Early-purple Orchid or *Orchis mascula* which flowers slightly earlier in spring. One feature they share is the upturned spur, but that species lacks the sepals' distinctive green stripes of *A. morio* and its leaves tend to have spots.

Green-winged Orchid – which was previously known as *Orchis morio* – tends to grow in coastal grassland, unimproved meadows and on calcareous soil. It has suffered from agricultural intensification, use of fertiliser and changing land use. I found it growing in a grazed field in County Tipperary in early May, 2017 and was immediately aware of how lucky I was to see such incredibly beautiful flowers. I could only take a few photographs as I was sharing the field with several large cows so beat a rather hasty retreat. ■

Zoë Devlin is passionate about wildflowers and the environment. She combined her interests in botany and photography by developing the website: www.wildflowersofireland.net

Zoë's new book, *Blooming Marvellous: A Wildflower Hunter's Year*, will be published by The Collins Press on 18 September and available in all good bookshops and online from: www.collinspress.ie



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