

**DACTYLORHIZA FUCHSII**

<b>Common Name:</b>	<b>Common spotted-orchid</b>
<b>Scientific Name:</b>	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>
<b>Irish Name:</b>	<i>Nuacht bhallach</i>

One of the Spotted-orchids which are extremely variable, this perennial is found in marshes, fens, calcareous or neutral soils, roadsides and meadows. It stands about 50–60cm high, (20” to 24”) bearing its amazingly designed flowers in an open spike.



Each flower has a distinctive trident-shaped lip with the central lobe being longer than those on either side. Sepals and petals create a hood over this, the pollinating insects' landing-pad. The large lip has a variety of spots, squiggles, flecks, streaks and dots. In bloom from May to August, these flowers can vary in colour from hues of palest pink to shades of purple. The flowers have slender spurs which taper and point downward. The lower leaves are narrow, lanceolate and usually spotted with smaller leaves clinging further up the stem. This is a native plant and it belongs to the Orchidaceae family.

I first spotted this Orchid in 1978 at 5-mile point in County Wicklow and I photographed it in the Burren, County Clare in 2009.

This is one of the most variable of our seven Spotted-Orchids and much inclined to hybridisation with other *Dactylorhiza* species. If ever there was a wildflower crying out to be seen through a hand lens, this must be it. ■



Zoë Devlin is a regular columnist for **Pollinia** on wild Irish orchids.

Zoë's website is "Wildflowers of Ireland" - <http://www.wildflowersofireland.net/>

Her book '**Wildflowers of Ireland - A Personal Record**' is published by the Collins Press, Cork.

