Epilobium chlorifolium

COMMON NAMES
mountain willowherb

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
White



Powdery mildew on leaves, Craigieburn Forest Park. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 01/01/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Otira Valley. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 29/12/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Clumped perennial herb, branched from the base and sometimes also above, the stems 70-450 mm tall; stems with strigulose lines running down from the margins of the petioles, evenly pubescent with an increasing proportion of glandular hairs in the inflorescence. Leaves opposite, alternate in the inflorescence, dill, the lateral veins prominent, 3-4 on each side of the midrib; petioles 0-2 mm long; lamina 10-30 × 12-20 mm, narrowly ovate to broadly ovate, apex acute, base rounded to obtuse, margins serrulate with 3-9 teeth on each side. Flowers erect. Ovaries 10-18 mm long, densely glandular-pubescent, some with with a few strigulose hairs; on a pedicel 1-3 mm long. Floral tube 0.9-1.4 × 1.2-2.4 mm. Sepals 3.0-5.6 × 1.2-1.5 mm, keeled, sparsely glandular-pubescent, often abaxially strigulose. Petals 7-11 × 5-8 mm, notch 1.2-1.6 mm deep, white. Stamen filaments white of two types: long (2.2-4.5 mm long) and short (1.4-2.5 mm long), Anthers 1.0-1.7 × 0.4-1.0 mm, yellow. Style 3.3-5.2 mm long, white; stigma 1.2-2.2 x 0.5-0.8 mm, white, clavate, surrounded by the anthers at anthesis or held well above them. Capsule 39-52 mm long, glandular-pubescent, sometimes with a few strigulose hairs, on a pedicel 15-25 mm long. Seeds 1.3-1.7 mm long, brown, obovate, sometimes with a narrow truncated beak, base subacute, finely reticulate-mammillate; coma 5-11 mm long, white, caducous.

SIMILAR TAXA
Allied to basicolous *Epilobium wilsonii* with which it shares amolst other characters pubescent ovaries whose indumentum is comprised solely of erect, glandular hairs. However, it differs from this narrow-range Kaikoura Coastline - South Marlborough endemic, by the much wider and less ecologically confined distribution; by the sepals which are 2.0-5.6 mm rather than 5.0-10.5 mm long in *E. wilsonii*; by the smaller petals (7-11 mm long cf. 10-18 mm long in *E. wilsonii*), and mostly smaller seeds 1.3-1.7 mm cf. 1.4-2.2 mm long) and distinctly longer coma (5-11 mm cf. 5-8 mm long in *E. wilsonii*).

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands from Mt Hikurangi, the main axial ranges, Mt Taranaki and the Central Volcanic Plateau south.

HABITAT
Subalpine to Alpine. Mostly in tussock grassland and herbfield but extending into the bushline along stream sides. *Epilobium chlorifolium* has also been collected once, as a weed of gravel ballast in a railway shunting yard.

GENUS
Epilobium

FAMILY
Onagraceae

AUTHORITY
Epilobium chlorifolium Hausskn.

SYNONYMS
Epilobium chloraefolium

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October - April

FRUITING
October - July

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Minute pappate seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Does best in a rockery. Dislikes warm, humid climates where it is prone to getting powdery mildew.

WHERE TO BUY
Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY
epilobium: From the Greek epi- ‘upon’ and lobos ‘a pod’, the flowers appearing to be growing on the seed pod.
chlorifolium: Green leaved

NVS CODE
EPICHL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025” Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Raven, P.H.; Raven, T.E. 1976: The genus *Epilobium* in Australasia. New Zealand DSIR Bulletin 216. Wellington, Government Printer.
Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009: Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285-309.
Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2011: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 September 2011) Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/epilobium-chlorifolium/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026