

Epilobium forbesii

COMMON NAMES

Forbes's willowherb

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout, thick almost coriaceous-leaved perennial herb of fine grained scree slopes. Plants branched from woody base. Tap root deeply descending. Leaves subsessile to sessile, crowded on 40-150 tall stems; stems brown or purple, densely glandular-pubescent and with an admixture of shorter non glandular hairs. Leaves mostly opposite, becoming alternate and crowded in the inflorescence, 6-32 x 3-13 mm, dull green to purple-green, narrowly to broadly obovate, apex obtuse to subacute, base attenuate, lamina serrated (with 6-26 teeth), lateral veins evident, 2-4 on either side of midrib. Inflorescence and flowers erect. Ovaries 4-6 mm long, green or dark green, densely glandular-pubescent, sessile. Floral tube 2 x 2.3 mm, abaxially densely glandular-pubescent with sparse long hairs near base. Petals 7-9 x 3.6-4.4 mm, white, notch 1.5-1.7 mm deep. Anthers yellow, 0.6-0.7 x 0.5-0.6 mm; filaments of longer stamens 2.1-2.5 mm long, those of shorter 1.6-1.7 mm long; stigma 2.0 x 0.7 mm, white, clavate. Capsules subsessile, 10-18 mm long, dark brown, initially glandular-pubescent maturing glabrate. Seeds 1.8-2.0 x 0.8-0.9 mm, purplish-brown, obovoid, smooth; coma 3.6-6.5 mm long, detaching readily, typically remaining in capsule until all seed have fallen out.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from all other New Zealand Epilobia except *E. astonii* (Allan) Raven et Engelhorn and *E. pubens* A.Rich. by the leaves and inflorescences densely covered in glandular hairs. From *E. astonii* and *E. pubens* it is distinguished by the erect inflorescence and subsessile capsules. *Epilobium forbesii* is further distinguished by its restriction to the sparsely vegetated eastern Marlborough and north Canterbury fine-grained, alpine scree that are present only within the greywacke mountains of the dry zone east of the main divide.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, eastern Marlborough on high greywacke mountains centred on the headwaters of the upper, Awatere, Clarence and Wairau Rivers. Also in north Canterbury (Mt Terako).

HABITAT

Alpine (1300-1800 m a.s.l.). Inhabiting fine grained scree often just downslope of rock outcrops on sparsely vegetated mountains within the inner dry zone of eastern Marlborough.

THREATS

Not Threatened but extremely local hence its listing as Range Restricted.



Middle Gully, Archeron. Photographer: Simon Moore, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Lake McRae, Molesworth. Photographer: Simon Moore, Licence: CC BY-SA.

GENUS

Epilobium

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium forbesii Allan

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January - March

FRUITING

January - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute papitate seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild

ETYMOLOGY

epilobium: From the Greek epi- 'upon' and lobos 'a pod', the flowers appearing to be growing on the seed pod.

NVS CODE

EPIFOR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

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 6 January 2008. Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/epilobium-forbesii/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026