

Epilobium gracilipes

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium gracilipes Kirk

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

EPIGRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands from Maungapohatu (Te Urewera) south but scarce in the North Island.

HABITAT

Epilobium gracilipes is a basicolous species confined to limestone, marble and other associated calcareous rocks (there is one known occurrence on andesite rocks on Mt Ruapehu). It is known from montane to alpine habitats (strictly subalpine to alpine in the North Island), and favours sheltered cliff faces and crevices in open forest, shrubland or grassland. Although E. gracilipes has a highly disjunct distribution it is usually abundant at the sites in which it has been found.



In cultivation ex NW Ruahine Range. Dec 1977.
Photographer: Colin Ogle

FEATURES

Dark reddish-tinged, decumbent perennial herb bearing numerous leafy stems and forming clumped, matted patches up to 200 mm diameter. Plants with lines of erect or appressed non-glandular hairs decurrent from the margins of the petioles. Leaves mostly opposite, alternate in the inflorescence, thick, fleshy lustrous, dark green tinged red or bright red above, usually bright red below, lateral veins not prominent, 2-3 on each side of midrib; petioles 1.2 mm long; lamina 5-18 x 3-10 mm (often equal in length to the internodes they subtend), narrowly ovate or ovate, apex rounded, obtuse to acute, base truncate, margins revolute, coarsely, remotely serrulate, teeth absent or up to 4 either side. Inflorescences 1-3(-8)-flowered, glabrous, borne in the axils of the upper leaves, nodding; flowers nodding, ovaries erect. Ovaries 8-18 mm long, on glabrous pedicels 10-34 mm long. Floral tube 0.5-1.5 x 0.9-1.4 mm, glabrous. Sepals keeled, 3.6-4.6 x 0.8-1.1 mm, glabrous. Petals 3.5-6.4 x 2.5-4.5 mm, white (sometimes flushed pink), the notch 0.7-1.8 mm deep. Anthers 0.6-0.8 x 0.35-0.45 mm, yellow; filaments white, those of the longer stamens 1.5-3.5 mm long, those of the shorter 1.0-1.5 mm long, the anthers of both pairs or the longer ones only shedding pollen directly onto stigma after the flower opens. Style 2.2-3.6 mm long, white; stigma 1.0-1.5 x 0.7-0.8 mm, white, clavate. Capsule 28-50 mm long, on pedicels 17-60 mm long. Seeds 1.1-1.5 mm long, brown to grey-brown or orange-brown, oblong-obovate to obovate, finely reticulate-mamillate; coma 3.0-7.0 mm long, white, persistent or caducous.

SIMILAR TAXA

Epilobium gracilipes is a very distinctive species easily recognised by its ecological preference for base-rich (usually limestone, marble and associated calcareous rock), and by the combination of having a decumbent, clumped growth habit, stems with pubescent lines decurrent from the petiole margins, thick, fleshy, glossy, dark green, red-tinged or bright red leaves (with distinctive red undersides), and nodding flowers.

FLOWERING

November - March

FRUITING

January - May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Epilobium gracilipes is a very attractive species well suited for cultivation in a rock garden. For best results it should be planted on or near some limestone rock, or given regular applications of lime. It prefers a sunny, well drained situation or plants are inclined to suffer from powdery mildew. Unlike many other epilobias *E. gracilipes* is not inclined to be weedy. Plants may be short-lived. Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed.

ETYMOLOGY

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

gracilipes: Slender

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (28 October 2012). Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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