

Epilobium nummulariifolium

COMMON NAME

creeping willowherb

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium nummulariifolium R.Cunn

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

EPINUM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand. North Island (throughout), South Island (mostly in the eastern half), Chatham Islands. Also recorded from Sardinia, Europe

HABITAT

Open disturbed ground in forest and grasslands from coastal situations to montane extending occasionally into subalpine habitats. This species is also a common plant of urban areas, wasteland, and plant nurseries where it can be an aggressive weed.



Dehiscing capsule. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt.
Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



Dehiscing capsule. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt.
Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Loosely matted, creeping perennial herb forming patches up to 1 m diameter; stems pale purplish, with strigulose hairs running down the lines decurrent from the margins of the petioles. Flowers arising individually from the leaf axils, the stems continuing to grow and root beyond the point where flowers are produced. Leaves opposite, membranous, yellowish-green, usually with red margins and 1-3(-4) inconspicuous lateral veins on either side of the midrib; lamina 3.0-13.0 × 3-11.0 mm, broadly ovate to obovate, obtuse or rounded at apex, rounded to truncate at base, margins remotely and shallowly serrulate with 2-11 teeth on either side; petiole distinct, 1-7 mm long. Flowers nodding, falling before full pedicel elongation is achieved. Ovaries densely grey-strigulose, 6-15-20 mm long, on a strigulose pedicel 7-35 mm long. Floral tube 0.4-1.1 mm deep, 0.6-11 mm diameter, sparsely strigulose without. Sepals not keeled, sparsely strigulose, 1.7-2.1 × 0.4-0.9 mm. Petals white, 1.9-3.4 × 1.7-2.1 mm, notch 0.6-0.8 mm deep. Anthers yellow, 0.5-0.6 × 0.3-0.4 mm, filaments of longer stamens 0.9-1.3 mm long, those of shorter 0.4-1.0 mm, both shedding pollen directly onto stigma at or before anthesis. Style white 1.0-1.5 mm long; stigma white, clavate, 1.0-1.8 × 0.5-0.7 mm, surrounded by anthers at anthesis. Capsule densely grey-strigulose, (10-)15-40 mm long, borne on a strigulose pedicel 23-130 mm long. Seeds brown, 0.7-1.0 × 0.2-0.4 mm, obovoid. minutely papillose; coma 4.0-5.5 mm long, readily detaching or persistent.

SIMILAR TAXA

Epilobium nummularifolium could be confused with *E. brunnescens*. *Epilobium nummularifolium* is best distinguished from *E. brunnescens* by the capsules which are copiously invested in grey-strigillose hairs rather than glabrate to sparsely hairy. However, the leaves are also very distinctive; those of *E. nummularifolium* are yellow-green usually with red-margins, broadly ovate to obovate and distinctly toothed, bearing 2-11 pairs of teeth on the leaf margins. The leaves of *Epilobium nummularifolium* are membranous, so they wilt readily on picking, whereas those of *E. brunnescens* are more fleshy so less inclined to wilt quickly. The leaves of *Epilobium brunnescens* are uniformly dark green, often tinged red or brown, ovate to broadly ovate and usually entire, though sometimes weakly toothed, and then bearing 1-2(-4) pairs of teeth on each margin. In *Epilobium brunnescens* the pedicel usually completes elongation before the flower drops off, whereas the flowers drop before pedicel elongation has completed in *E. nummularifolium*.

FLOWERING

September to May

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

October to June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from seed and rooted pieces. Inclined to become weedy, often an aggressive pest plant in cultivation. A common 'accidental' weed transported in the soil beneath nursery raised plants.

ETYMOLOGY

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

nummulariifolium: Coin leaved

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 December 2019). Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Raven, P.H.; Raven, T.E. 1976: The genus *Epilobium* in Australasia. New Zealand DSIR Bulletin 216. Wellington, Government Printer.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/epilobium-nummulariifolium/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

