Epilobium pedunculare

COMMON NAME
willowherb

SYNONYMS
Epilobium nummulariifolium var. pedunculare (A.Cunn.) Hook.f., Epilobium caespitosum Hausskn., Epilobium linnaeoides Hook.f.

FAMILY
Onagraceae

AUTHORITY
Epilobium pedunculare A.Cunn

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE
EPIPED

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North (but scarce north of Auckland), South, Stewart, Antipodes, Auckland, Campbell, Macquarie Islands. Naturalised in Great Britain & Ireland.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. Usually in forest especially on damp lightly shaded and sparsely vegetated banks and along shaded stream sides. Also found in damp sites within tussock grassland, and amongst or growing from the bases of sedges (Carex spp.) in swamps.
FEATURES
Creeping perennial herb forming diffuse mats up to 0.5 m diameter, stems prostrate, rooting at nodes; strigulose or with short erect hairs on lines decurrent from the margins of the petioles. Leaves opposite, green to coppery, dull to ± coppery, the lateral veins inconspicuous, usually 2-3 on each side of the midrib; petioles 0-5 mm long; lamina 2.5-14 × 2.5-15 mm, very broadly ovate to orbicular, subacute to rounded at the apex, obtuse to truncate at the base, serrate with 3-14 teeth on each side. Flowers erect arising from the axils of ordinary leaves with the stems continuing to grow beyond them. Ovaries 8-25 mm, glabrous; on a pedicel 3-50 mm long. Floral tube 0.7-0.9 × 0.9-1.5 mm. Sepals 1.7-3.5 × 0.6-1.0 mm, prominent in bud and opened flowers, not keeled, glabrous, with much extended, light-coloured apices. Petals 3.0-5.0 × 1.9-2.6 mm, notch 0.6-1.0 mm deep, white (rarely pink). Stamen filaments white of two types: long (0.5-2.0 mm long) and short (0.6-1.0 mm long), Anthers 0.2-0.25 × 0.1-0.15 mm, yellow. Style 0.7-1.8 mm long, white; stigma 1.2-1.9 x 0.5-0.9 mm, white, clavate, surrounded by the anthers at anthesis. Capsule 20-50 mm long, subglabrous to glabrous, on a pedicel 45-100 mm long. Seeds 0.6-1.0 mm long, orange-brown, narrowly elliptic, narrowly obovate-elliptic or narrowly oblong-obovate, finely reticulate-mammillate; coma 5-7 mm long, white, caducous.

SIMILAR TAXA
Epilobium pedunculare is a very distinctive species that is perhaps most similar to E. rotundifolium with which it may share a common ancestry (see comments by Raven & Raven 1976). From Epilobium rotundifolium and indeed other epilobias, E. pedunculare is distinguished by the opposite, sharply serrated leaves (each bearing 5-14 teeth on either side); by the creeping stems which root at the nodes and grow beyond the flowering portion; by the stem indumentum which is not evenly pubescent, bearing instead short, erect, bristly hairs; flowers which are borne in leaf axils, floral tube 0.7-0.9 × 0.9-1.5 mm; white (rarely pink) petals, and seeds that lack an obvious cellular rim. Large forms of E. pedunculare (i.e those that match the type of E. linnaeoides) unless flowering can be confused with E. rotundifolium, especially as the young growth is often tinged coppery.

FLOWERING
September - May

FLOWER COLOURS
White

FRUITING
October - July

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Not as invasive as other species. A rather attractive ground cover for a damp, shaded site in most gardens and soil types

ETYMOLOGY
epilobium: From the Greek epi- ‘upon’ and lobos ‘a pod’, the flowers appearing to be growing on the seed pod.
pedunculare: Flowers stalked
WHERE TO BUY
Not commercially available

TAXANOMIC NOTES
Raven & Raven (1976) treated Epilobium linnaeoides Hook.f. as part of E. pedunculare. Epilobium linnaeoides was described from specimens collected from Campbell Island and is the typical form of E. pedunculare sensu Raven & Raven (1976) found in the southern North Island, South, Stewart, Chatham and subantarctic Islands. Some botanist regard E. linnaeoides as a distinct species in its own right noting that in some parts of the country it grows sympatrically (and more rarely syntopically) with E. pedunculare. However, in this particular case as Raven & Raven (1976) point out E. linnaeoides differs from E. pedunculare by its larger size and overall more robust growth habit. There are no other significant differences, on which basis it seems that the retention of two species as advocated by some botanists has little to commend it. Further, plants matching the description of E. linnaeoides collected from the Chatham Islands and cultivated in Auckland over a period of some 12 months reverted in size to the “typical” form of E. pedunculare, while seed collected from the Chatham Islands also reverted. Under these circumstances, and pending further study it seems better to retain the circumscription of E. pedunculare offered by Raven & Raven (1976).

ATTRIBUTION

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Epilobium pedunculare Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/epilobium-pedunculare/ (Date website was queried)

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