

# Epilobium pictum

## COMMON NAMES

grassland willow herb

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, NO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Gracile, perennial herb up to 400 × 400 mm. Stems numerous, arising from a open, loosely rhizomatous root crown; stems up to 400 mm long, densely invested in ± appressed hairs, with the hairs of the inflorescence grey-strigulose. Leaves opposite, except near inflorescence where alternate, upper surface grey-green or light green with darker bluish green to dark green mottling, undersides usually reddish, petiole, leaf margins and undersides strigulose, 8.0-22.0 × 2.5-6.0 mm, narrow elliptic to elliptic, base narrowly cuneate, apex acute, margins coarsely serrate, teeth 3-6 on each side; lateral veins 2-4 each side of midrib, inconspicuous. Inflorescence drooping bud. Flowers erect up to 9 mm diameter. Pedicel 0-3 mm long. Ovaries 7-10 mm long, grey-pubescent. Sepals not keeled, 1.8-2.3 × 0.9-1.1 mm, grey-pubescent or glabrate. Floral tube 0.6-0.9 mm deep. 1.6-1.8 mm diameter at apex, internally bearing a conspicuous ring of long white hairs. Petals white, 2.8-4.5 × 1.5-3.4 mm wide, notched, notch 0.6-0.9 mm deep. Stamens 8, of two lengths, 4 longer (1.7-2.1 mm) and 4 shorter (1.0-1.3 mm); anthers 0.5-0.7 × 0.4-0.5 mm, yellow. Style 1.2-2.0 mm long, white; stigma clavate, 1.0-1.9 × 0.4-0.5 mm. Capsules on pedicels 0.2-7.0 mm long; narrowly cylindric, 20-25 mm long, grey-pubescent. Seeds 0.9-1.1 × 0.3-0.4 mm, brown, obovoid, papillose; coma easily detached, 5-8 mm long, white.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from other willow herbs by the loosely rhizomatous, spreading growth habit, finely, densely pubescent stems, petioles, leaf margins and undersides, light green, distinctly mottled with dark green leaves, and flowers which are nodding in bud, erect when open.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the eastern side of the South Island of New Zealand.

## HABITAT

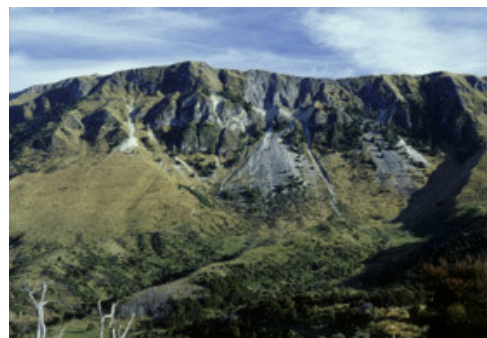
An uncommon, sparsely distributed species of bush margins and tussock grassland. Usually found near rock overhangs, or in semi-shaded sites.

## THREATS

Evidently a naturally uncommon, sparsely distributed species which is now threatened at most sites by habitat loss and competition from weeds. Recent surveys suggest it has gone extinct at many sites where it had been recorded 20-30 years ago.



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Habitat. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Licence: CC BY.

## GENUS

Epilobium

## FAMILY

Onagraceae

## AUTHORITY

Epilobium pictum Petrie

## SYNONYMS

Epilobium haloragifolium sensu Kirk

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

December - April

## FRUITING

January to July

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from seed and rooted pieces of stem.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**pictum:** Painted, variegated

## NVS CODE

EPIPIC

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2004 | Data Deficient

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NStr, OL, PF, TL 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 6 January 2008. Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026