

Epilobium tasmanicum

COMMON NAMES

willowherb

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial, matted, creeping alpine herb, stems rooting at nodes, much interwoven, or with erect reddish stems up to 150 mm tall; stems glabrous or with lines of fine strigulose hairs decurrent from the margins of the petioles. Leaves mostly opposite, alternate in the inflorescence, longer than the internodes they subtend, glossy, the lateral veins barely visible, 1-3 on each side of the midrib; petiole 1-2 mm long, usually appressed to main stem; lamina 6-20 × 2-55 mm, bright green, narrowly elliptic or elliptic, base attenuate, apex acute to subentire, margins serrulate, with 3-5 teeth on each side, or subentire. Inflorescence nodding in erect forms, the flowers scattered well down the stem. Flowers erect. Ovaries 9-12 mm long, glabrous, pedicels 1.5-5.0 mm. Floral tube 0.5-1.1 × 1.2-2.2 mm, glabrous. Sepals 1.7-3.5 × 0.9-1.4 mm, not keeled, glabrous, often reddish-margined. Petals 3.3-5.0 × 1.5-3.6 mm, the notch 0.5-1.1 mm deep, white. Stamen filaments white of two types: long (1.0-2.5 mm long) and short (0.5-1.8 mm long). Anthers 0.4-0.45 × 0.3-0.4 mm, yellow. Style 1.0-1.6 mm long, white; stigma 0.9-2.2 × 0.5-0.7 mm, white, clavate. Capsule 8-22 mm long, bright-green, ± succulent, glabrous, on a pedicel 2-40 mm long. Seeds 0.9-1.2 mm long, orange to orange-brown, obovate, apex rounded, base subacute, finely papillate; coma 3-5 mm long, white, caducous.

SIMILAR TAXA

Epilobium tasmanicum is distinguished from other New Zealand epilobia by the restriction to the South Island, where it inhabits alpine areas only; bright green, narrowly elliptic or elliptic leaves that are 6-20 × 2-55 mm with 3-5 teeth on each side; by the nodding inflorescence; flowers with sepals 1.7-3.5 × 0.9-1.4 mm; white petals, and glabrous ovaries; and by the bright-green, glabrous, somewhat fleshy 8-22 mm long capsule.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous: New Zealand: South Island (from Nelson to Southland).

Also Australia (New South Wales and Tasmania).

HABITAT

Alpine (1,200-1,500 m asl), in moist places in fellfield, herbfield at the bases of cliff faces or in the shelter of rocks. Also inhabiting fine-grained scree, often in the vicinity of areas of snow-melt or glacial cirques.

GENUS

Epilobium



Old Man Range. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 21/12/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Princess Bath Tarn, St James. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 27/01/2018, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium tasmanicum Hausskn.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

December - March

FRUITING

January - April

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Best grown in a rockery or alpine house. Dislikes humidity and warmth.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

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

tasmanicum: Of or from Tasmania (Australia); named in honour of 17th century Dutch navigator Abel Janszoon Tasman (1603-1659)

NVS CODE

EPITAS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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 (31 August 2011). Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026