Gentianella bellidifolia

COMMON NAMES
gentian

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Grey, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Plants polycarpic, height in flower 80–370 mm. Root 1.2–6.0 mm diameter at stem base. Caudex unbranched or branched, 15–90 mm long, stolons absent. Flowering stems lateral only, 1–13 per plant, largest flowering stem 1.0–3.2 mm diameter, green, tinted purple-black, or bronze, lateral flowering stems erect or decumbent, stem leaves 2–4 pairs per stem, lowest pedicels from halfway up flowering stem or near apex of flowering stem. Rosette of leaves present and distinct from flowering stem leaves, leaves narrowly elliptic, elliptic, rhomboid, or orbicular, 11.0–140.0 × 4.0–12.5 mm, green or tinted purple-black, channelled, larger leaves V-shaped, leaf apex acute to rounded; petiole usually distinct, 7.0–27.0 × 0.8–4.6 mm. Flowering stem leaves elliptic to narrowly ovate. Pedicels 1 per leaf axil, 1–48 mm long, 0.8–1.9 mm diameter, 0.5–0.8 mm diameter when dry. Flowers 1–45 per plant, 12–23 mm long, rarely female. Calyx 8.2–13 mm long; lobes 3.8–8.3 mm long, 1.7–4.2 mm wide at base, green or green tinted purple-black, crimson, or brown, plane, lobe apices acute, margins convex, smooth or minutely denticulate, hairs at calyx–corolla fusion line present or absent, hairs at lobe sinuses few. Corolla 15.6–22.6 mm long, white (in the South Island) or with veins coloured grey-violet (in the North Island), tube 3.4–6.0 mm long; lobes 11.1–17.0 × 6.3–12.4 mm, hairs above sinus present; nectary 0.4–1.4 mm from corolla base. Filaments 7.7–12.5 mm long from corolla base, 0.6–2.0 mm wide. Anthers 1.8–3.0 mm long, anther wall blue-black, mouth yellow, extrorse at anthesis. Stigma colourless. Ovules 16–68 per ovary, ovary yellow in maturity, rarely turning blue. Capsule 17–24 mm long.

Mt Burns, Southland. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Flowering plant. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 16/02/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.

SIMILAR TAXA
Recognised by the flowering stems arising from below the apex of the leaf rosettes; polycarpic flowering habit; narrowly elliptic, elliptic, rhomboid, or orbicular green or purple-black tinted leaves (11-142 mm long); stem leaves sessile and smaller than rosette leaves; large white flowers. Closest to G. amabilis from which differs by its taller growth habit, unspotted leaves narrower calyx lobes 1.7–4.4 mm (cf. 3.1–4.7 mm wide G. amabilis), and narrower filaments (1.2 mm cf. 1.7 mmwide).

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand North and South Islands from Pureora south.

HABITAT
Subalpine to alpine in tussock grasslands, herbfields and fellfields

GENUS
Gentianella

FAMILY
Gentianaceae

AUTHORITY
Gentianella bellidifolia Hook.f.

SYNONYMS
Gentiana bellidifolia Hook.f., Gentiana bellidifolia var. australis Petrie ex Cheeseman, Gentiana flaccida Petrie, Chionogentias bellidifolia (Hook.f.) L.G.Adams, Oreophylax bellidifolius (Hook.f.) Á.Löve nom. inval.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
February – April

FRUITING
March - June

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Seeds dispersed by ballistic projection, wind and water (Thorsen et al., 2009)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
gentianella: Little Gentiana (named after Gentius, 6th century king of Illyria, who found the roots of the yellow gentian to have a healing effect on his malaria-stricken troops)

NVS CODE
GENBEL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
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

Glenny, D. 2004: A revision of the genus Gentianella in New Zealand. New Zealand Journal of Botany 42: 361-530.
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

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet for NZPCN prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2004). Description modified from Glenny (2004)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gentianella-bellidifolia/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026