

Gentianella chathamica subsp. chathamica

COMMON NAMES

Chatham Island gentian

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Slender or stout plant up to 24 cm tall, all parts hairless. Plants arising from a rosette of somewhat fleshy ovate green, olive green, maroon-tinged or maroon leaves. Stem leaves smaller than rosette leaves, sessile. Inflorescence of 1-50 (or more), white, white-crimson or pink-tinged, rarely pink or magenta “tulip-like” flowers, the petals with pale green, or crimson veins.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Plants monocarpic, biennial, height in flower 90–235 mm. Caudex unbranched, stolons absent. Root 1.0–3.3 mm diameter at stem base. Flowering stems terminal only or terminal and lateral, 1–15 per plant, largest flowering stem 2.1–2.3 mm diameter at base, stems tinted crimson, lateral flowering stems erect, flowering stem leaves 1–3 pairs per stem, lowest pedicels from near base of flowering stem. Rosette of leaves distinct to not very distinct from flowering stem leaves; leaves ovate, 21–31 × 7–22 mm, tinted crimson above and below, flat or V-shaped, not recurved, apex acute or rounded; petiole distinct, c. 9.5 × 0.6–3.0 mm. Flowering stem leaves ovate, sessile. Pedicels 1 per leaf axil, 5–20 mm long, 0.5–0.8 mm diameter. Flowers 5–50 per plant, 6–12 mm long. Calyx 4.6–7.5 mm long, green, hairs at calyx–corolla fusion line present; lobes 4.7–5.7 mm long, 1.5–2.5 mm wide at base, plane, apices acute or obtuse, margins smooth, sinus hairs absent or sparse. Corolla 5.1–11.8 mm long, white with crimson or pink tinting, rarely pink or magenta, veins pale or crimson coloured; tube 2.5–3.2 mm long; lobes 5.0–8.6 mm long, 2.7–5.2 mm wide, hairs below sinus present; nectary 0.9–1.2 mm from corolla base. Filaments 2.3–6.6 mm long from corolla base, 0.4–0.7 mm wide. Anthers 0.5–1.4 mm long, anther wall purple-red, mouth yellow or orange-red, introrse or extrorse at anthesis; pollen orange. Female flowers absent. Stigma colourless. Ovules 22–60 per ovary. Capsule 6.7–12.5 mm long.



A well coloured example of *Gentianella chathamica*, Manaea | Ocean Mail, Rekohu | Wharekauri | Chatham Island, December 2022. This colour variant is very uncommon. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 08/11/2022, Licence: CC BY.



Robust specimen of *Gentianella chathamica* growing in reverting pasture overlying peat on Monument Hill, above Te Koparuparu Bay, Waitangi West, Rekohu | Wharekauri | Chatham Island. Associates are aruhe (*Pteridium esculentum*) and the endemic *Poa chathamica*. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 23/12/2020, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

The only *Gentianella* present on the Chatham Islands. It is separated from *G. chathamica* subsp. *nemorosa* (<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gentianella-chathamica-subsp-nemorosa/>) by plants mostly having a single flowering stem; 25-60 ovules per ovary; anthers that are 0.5–1.4 mm long; and a colourless stigma. The relationship to subsp. *nemorosa* seems somewhat ambiguous and it is more likely that subsp. *chathamica* is related to the other subantarctic gentians. *Gentianella chathamica* subsp. *nemorosa* is probably better treated as a distinct species.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Chatham Islands, Rekohu | Wharekauri | Chatham, Rangihau | Rangiauria | Pitt Island.

HABITAT

Coastal to inland, where it is widespread in open peatlands, restiad bog, bracken fernland overlying peat and within poorly drained pasture

THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, range-restricted island endemic under no obvious threats. Being unpalatable to stock it is often abundant in marginal farmland.

GENUS

Gentianella

FAMILY

Gentianaceae

AUTHORITY

Gentianella chathamica (Cheeseman) T.N.Ho et S.W.Liu subsp. *chathamica*

SYNONYMS

Gentiana chathamica Cheeseman, *Chionogentias chathamica* (Cheeseman) L.G.Adams, *Gentianella chathamica* (Cheeseman) T.N.Ho et S.W.Liu; *Chionogentias pleurogynoides* var. *umbellata* Kirk

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

July – February

FRUITING

August - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (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)

chathamica: From the Chatham Islands

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

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-chathamica-subsp-chathamica/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026