Gentianella corymbifera subsp. corymbifera

COMMON NAMES
grassland gentian, tall 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
Red/Pink, White

Gentianella corymbifera subsp. corymbifera. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Plants biennial, monocarpic rarely polycarpic, height in flower 60–470 mm. Caudex unbranched, 15–70 mm long. Root branched or unbranched, 1.3–11.3 mm diameter at stem base. Flowering stems terminal only or terminal and lateral with more slender lateral branches from among the rosette leaves, 1–9 per plant, terminal flowering stem 3.0–11.3 mm diameter at base, green, tinted crimson or purple-black, lateral flowering stems erect, internodes 2–6 pairs per stem, lowest pedicels from near base of flowering stem, halfway up flowering stem, or near apex of flowering stem. Rosette of leaves present and distinct from flowering stem leaves, leaves narrowly elliptic to elliptic or ovate, leaf apex acute to rounded, 41.0–168.0 × 6.5–31 mm, sometimes tinted crimson or purple-black below or on the petiole, usually flat, sometimes V-shaped or channelled at the petiole, petiole indistinct, 10–40 mm long, 4.0–18.5 mm wide at leaf base. Flowering stem leaves ovate, apex acute, sessile. Flowers 7–110 per plant, 14–23 mm long, rarely female. Pedicels 1–3 per leaf axil, 3–50 mm long, 0.9–1.5 mm diameter. Calyx 6.8–18 mm long, 2.7-4.0 mm wide at base, green or tinted purple-black, crimson, or bronze; lobes 2.9–11.3 × 2.7–6.8 mm, plane, apices acute, margins smooth or minutely denticulate, hairs at sinuses present or absent. Corolla 14.0–21.1 mm long, white, rarely flushed with pink; tube 2.5–12 mm long; lobes 7.5–15.5 × 5.1–10.2 mm, hairs below sinus present; nectary 0.7–1.5 mm from corolla base. Filaments 7.2–12.8 mm long from corolla base, 1.1–1.6 mm wide. Anthers 1.9–3.2 mm long, anther wall yellow or blue-black, mouth yellow, extrorse, rarely introrse at anthesis. Stigma colourless. Ovules 36–68 per ovary. Capsules 12–19 mm long.

Gentianella corymbifera subsp. corymbifera, Isolation Basin. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from other Gentianella by the very stout terminal flowering stem (3.0–11.3 mm diameter), which may bear up to 110 flowers; by the petiole of the rosette leaves which is very wide (4.0– 18.5 mm); and by the usually large, thick, fleshy, flat rosette leaves which often have a V-shaped petiole. Distinguished from subsp. gracilis by its monocarpic life form; by the terminal flowering stem 3.0–11.3 mm diameter when fresh; leaves 41–168 × 6.5–31 mm wide; calyx lobes 2.7–4.0 mm wide; corolla 14.0–21.1 mm long; and by the filaments 1.1–1.6 mm wide.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago, mostly east of the Main Divide, and scarce in Otago)

HABITAT
Montane to alpine. In short-tussock and tall-tussock grassland, rough pasture on hill slopes, within intermontane basins, along river terraces, and more rarely in ephemeral or permanent wetlands. Being unpalatable to livestock it is common in heavily browsed montane to alpine grasslands.

GENUS
Gentianella

FAMILY
Gentianaceae

AUTHORITY
Gentianella corymbifera (Kirk) Holub subsp. corymbifera

SYNONYMS
Gentiana corymbifera Kirk, Gentiana bellidifolia var. vacillata Kirk, Chionogentias corymbifera (Kirk) L.G.Adams, Gentiana pleurogynoides var. rigida Kirk, Gentiana bellidifolia var. vacillata Kirk

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
December – March

FRUITING
February - May

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.

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)
corymbifera: Corymb-bearing

NVS CODE
GENCSC

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-corymbifera-subsp-corymbifera/

PDF DATE

27 May 2026