

Gentianella lilliputiana

COMMON NAMES

little gentian

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPT

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Plants annual, monocarpic, annual, 6–25 mm tall in flower. Caudex unbranched. Taproot slender. Flowering stems terminal only or terminal and lateral, 1–4 per plant, stem colour yellow, lateral flowering stems erect or decumbent, c.0.7–0.6 mm diameter; flowering stem leaves 1–2 pairs per stem, lowest pedicels from near apex of flowering stem. Rosette of leaves absent from flowering plants, leaves linear or narrowly elliptic, 1.5–13 × 0.5–2.0 mm, flat, not recurved, petiole indistinct, 2–7 mm long, 0.4–0.6 mm wide at leaf base. Flowering stem leaves narrower than leaves. Pedicels 0.7–1.7 mm long, c. 0.5 mm diameter. Flowers 1–4 per plant, 3.7–5.0 mm long. Calyx 4–5-lobed, 2.4–6.2 mm long, green tinted purple-black, hairs at calyx–corolla fusion line absent; lobes 1.0–3.3 mm long, 0.95–2.1 mm wide at base, plane, apices acute, margins smooth, sinus hairs absent. Corolla 3.4–4.3 mm long, white, veins uncoloured; tube 1.4–3.2 mm long; 4–5-lobed, lobes 2.0–3.6 mm long, 1.3–2.3 mm wide, hairs below sinus absent; nectary 0.6–1.0 mm from corolla base. Filaments 1.9–4.1 mm long from corolla base, 0.2–0.3 mm wide. Anthers 0.4–0.7 mm long, introrse at anthesis. Ovules 2–13 per ovary. Capsule 4.0–6.0 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from other *Gentianella* by its annual growth habit; very small size; and usually by the presence of a single terminal, mostly 4-merous flower (though on occasion there may be up to four flowers present). It most closely resembles *G. filipes* which is endemic to north-west Nelson in size. In Otago cushion bogs it could be confused with *G. amabilis*. From which it differs by being an annual, rather than a perennial, by its parts being very much smaller and by the flat rather than V-shaped leaves.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (south Canterbury (Kirkliston Range, Hawkdun Range) and Otago (Dunstan Range)

HABITAT

Alpine in bogs and flushes in alpine grasslands and herbfields on low relief ridge tops



Northern Dunstan Range. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Date taken: 04/02/2000, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Northern Dunstan Range. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Date taken: 04/02/2000, Licence: CC BY-SA.

THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, Range-restricted endemic which is locally common within its few known habitats. At present here are no known threats.

GENUS

Gentianella

FAMILY

Gentianaceae

AUTHORITY

Gentianella lilliputiana (C.J.Webb) Glenny

SYNONYMS

Gentiana lilliputiana C.J.Webb, Chionogentias lilliputiana (C.J.Webb) L.G.Adams

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January – February

FRUITING

February - April

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)

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: EF

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, NS, NS, Sp, St 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-lilliputiana/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026