Gentianella patula

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
Red/Pink, White

Cobb Valley. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 17/03/2016, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Plants biennial and monocarpic, or polycarpic, height in flower 60–370 mm. Root 2.7–6.3 mm diameter at stem base. Caudex unbranched or branched, 25–70 mm long; stolons absent. Flowering stems terminal and lateral, 1–36 per plant, largest flowering stem 1.1–3.6 mm diameter at base, tinted crimson to purple-black, lateral flowering stems decumbent or erect, flowering stem leaves 3–5 pairs per stem, lowest pedicels from near apex of flowering stem. Rosette of leaves distinct from flowering stem leaves, leaves elliptic, 18–44 × 3.5–9.0 mm, green, flat or V-shaped, recurved or not; leaf apex acute; petiole distinct, 10–29 mm long, 1.5–2.5 mm wide at leaf base. Flowering stem leaves ovate, apex acute, base clasping, V-shaped strongly. Pedicels 1 or 2 per leaf axil, 9–35 mm long, 0.8–1.0 mm diameter. Flowers (3–)40–86(–126) per plant, 10–15 mm long. Calyx 5.1–8.5 mm long, green or green tinted purple-black, hairs at calyx–corolla fusion line present; lobes 3.4–6.0 mm long, 1.8–2.6 mm wide at base, plane, apices acute, margins smooth, sinus hairs sparse. Corolla 5.9–16 mm long, white or tinted pink or purple, veins uncoloured or purple; tube 3.0–3.5 mm long; lobes 9.0–11.4 × 5.5–8.0 mm, hairs below sinus present; nectary 0.3–0.8 mm from corolla base. Filaments 4.5–8.8 mm long from corolla base, 0.7–1.0 mm wide. Anthers 1.7–2.4 mm long, anther wall blue-black, mouth yellow or orange-red, extrorse at anthesis or horizontal at anthesis. Stigma colourless or grey-violet. Ovules 24–44 per ovary. Capsule 12–15 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most closely related to Gentianella montana from which it is distinguished smaller overall stature; larger number of flowering stems, yet smaller flowers. Most G. montana populations have white flowers without coloured veins, whereas high elevation populations of G. patula have white flowers, lower elevation populations flowers with coloured corolla veins

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury)

HABITAT
Subalpine or montane in Valley floor and high alpine tussock and other grasslands, in herbfields, on alluvial fans, and along the margins of subalpine scrub margins

GENUS
Gentianella

FAMILY
Gentianaceae

AUTHORITY
Gentianella patula (Kirk) Holub

SYNONYMS
Gentiana patula (Kirk) Cheeseman, Chionogentias patula (Kirk) L.G.Adams

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
December – May

FRUITING
February - 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

WHERE TO BUY
Not Commericially Available

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)
patula: Spreading

NVS CODE
GENPAT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
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-patula/

PDF DATE
25 May 2026