

Gentianella stevenii

COMMON NAMES

Charleston gentian

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, EF, OL

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted perennial plant up to 130 mm tall when flowering. Flowering stems terminal and lateral, tinted crimson, 4-10 per plant. Rosette leaves with distinct petiole 19-30 mm long. Lamina orbicular 35-44 x 10-17.5 mm, green, not recurved, margin not thickened; apex rounded. Pedicels 1 per leaf axil, 1-16 mm long. Flowers 8-38 per plant, 12-15 mm long, perfect, rarely female. Calyx 6-8.2 mm, green; lobes 3.9-5.5 x 1.8-2.4 mm, plane. Corolla 9.5-14.8 mm, white, veins purple; tube 2.6-4.5 mm; lobes 9.6-10.5 x 3.3-5 mm, nectaries 0.7-1.2 mm from corolla base. Filaments 5-7.4 mm from corolla base. Anthers 1-1.5 mm, anther wall blue-black, mouth yellow, extrorse at anthesis. Stigma colourless. Ovules 16-30 per ovary. Capsule 10-11.8 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most closely allied to *G. saxosa* from which it is distinguished by the orbicular leaves, plane calyx lobes, crimson flowering stems, purple corolla veins, and smaller anthers (1-1.5 cf. 2-2.1 mm). It is endemic to northern Westland, whereas *G. saxosa* occurs from Fiordland and Otago south to Stewart Island.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, west coast, near Charleston

HABITAT

Coastal, on rock ledges and associated coastal turfs, often within spray zone

THREATS

Threatened by rock climbing, human traffic (trampling), goats, weeds and habitat deterioration. Previously recorded as *Gentiana aff. saxosa* (AK 7316; Charleston) in de Lange et al., 2004, Threatened and uncommon plants on New Zealand, *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42: 45-76.

GENUS

Gentianella

FAMILY

Gentianaceae

AUTHORITY

Gentianella stevenii U.B.Deshmukh et Kottaim.



Flowering adult plant near Charleston.
Photographer: David A. Norton, Licence: CC BY-NC.



In Cult at Percy Scenic Reserve. January.
Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SYNONYMS

Gentianella scopulorum Glenny - nom. illeg.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(October-) November - February

FRUITING

December - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy to grow from seed. Does best in a sunny but cool and damp situation. One of the few New Zealand gentians to grow reasonably well in cultivation. Should not be removed from the wild

EXTRA INFORMATION

Under intensive management by the New Zealand Department of Conservation. New populations have been established near Westport. At one time less than 40 plants were known from the wild in two small sites. [Story](#) in Issue 34 of *Trilepidea* (September 2006).

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for November 2005](#) for the full story.

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)

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP, EF, OL

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, EF, OL

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: OL, EF, CD

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Christchurch, Canterbury University Press. 471pp.

Deshmuku, U.B.; Kottaimuthu, R. 2021: A new replacement name for *Gentianella scopulorum* Glenny (Gentianaceae). *Phytotaxa* 518: 239–240

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 based on Glenny (2004) (see also de Lange et al. 2010)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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(Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gentianella-stevenii/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026