Geranium sessiliflorum var. arenarium

COMMON NAMES
short-flowered cranesbill

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, DPS, DPT, RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
All parts softly and finely pilose. Leaves orbicular, closely lobed, divided at base, unusually appressed to the ground, petioles and peduncles tinged with purple, blade pale glaucous grey. Flowers white.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most similar to *G. brevicaule* Hook.f. from which it differs mainly by the softly silvery-pilose, glaucescent to silvery leaves which are slightly larger in size. The flowers appear to be smaller. A poorly known taxon whose exact status requires further clarification. It does, however, appear to be distinct from the other variants now included in *G. brevicaule*.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. South Island, South of Otago Peninsula throughout the Foveaux Strait area and in northern Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT
Coastal. Mainly found in sand country—usually in dune swales or on shallowly sloping beaches. Sometimes on or near rock outcrops or within peaty soils near seepages or within coastal turfs.

Fortrose Spit, Southland. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 02/06/2012, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Tiwai Peninsula, Southland. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 06/01/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

THREATS
Never that common at any particular location and yet occupies a large range. At risk in its preferred sand dune habitats from the spread of marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) and other weeds.

GENUS
Geranium

FAMILY
Geraniaceae

AUTHORITY
Geranium sessiliflorum var. arenarium G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson

SYNONYMS
Geranium sessiliflorum subp. novae-zelandiae var. arenarium (G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson) Carolin

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Allan (1961) treats *G. brevicaule* Hook.f. as a synonym of *G. sessiliflorum* var. *arenarium*, incorrectly stating that the type locality of *G. brevicaule* is Chalky Inlet, Fiordland, New Zealand when it is Tasmania (Aedo et al. 2005). Fiordland plants appear to match *G. sessiliflorum* var. *arenarium*, and together with plants from Stewart Island, the Foveaux Strait and coastal portion of Otago these plants do not fit closely any of the other plants within New Zealand or Australia now attributed to *G. brevicaule* (cf. Aedo et al. 2005). Therefore pending further study NZPCN prefer to regard this variety as distinct from *G. brevicaule* (see also Mitchell et al. 2009), and as it has no published rank yet within that species, we use the only published name available for it, *G. sessiliflorum* var. *arenarium*.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–March

FRUITING
December–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from seed. An excellent pot plant. Does well in full sun in a free-draining substrate.

ETYMOLOGY
geranium: From the Greek geranos ‘crane’, the fruit of the plant resembling the head and beak of this bird, hence the common name cranesbill.
sessiliflorum: With unstalked flowers

NVS CODE
GERSVA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 52

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, DP, RR
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, RR
2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, RR
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: CI, PF, RR 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
Aedo C, Navarro C, Alarcón ML. 2005: Taxonomic revision of *Geranium* sections *Andina* and *Chilensia* (Geraniaceae). *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society 149*: 1–68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1095-8339.2005.00432.x
Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.
Mitchell AD, Heenan PB, Paterson AM. 2009. Phylogenetic relationships of *Geranium* species indigenous to New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 47*: 21–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/00288250909509789

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (28 July 2007).

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/geranium-sessiliflorum-var-arenarium/

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