Geranium solanderi

COMMON NAMES
Solander's geranium, matua-kumara, huika

BIOSTATUS
Native

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Violet/Purple

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Perennial herb 0.12–1.0 m tall. **Rootstock** 2.4–19.1 mm diam., without fusiform roots. **Stem** erect to ascending, with straight, patent to retrorse, non-appressed, eglandular hairs 0.4–1.8 mm long. **Basal leaves** in a ± deciduous rosette; lamina 12–45 × 14–57 mm, polygonal in outline, cordate, palmatifid (divided for 0.5–0.8 of its length), pilose, with ± erect, eglandular hairs; segments 5–7, obtriangular, 2.2–6.8 mm at the base; petioles to 180 mm long, with patent, eglandular hairs 0.4–1.7 mm long; stipules 2.2–8 × 0.5–2.1 mm, with eglandular hairs on abaxial surface and on the margin, glabrous adaxially. **Inflorescence** 2-flowered cymules, solitary; peduncles (4)–40–(61) cm long, with patent to retrorse, not appressed, eglandular hairs 0.3–2.0 mm long; bracteoles 1.5–7.4 × 0.3–0.8 mm, lanceolate, with eglandular hairs on abaxial surface and on the margin, glabrous adaxially; pedicels 8–34 mm long, with patent to retrorse, not appressed, eglandular hairs 0.2–2.0 mm long; pedicel and peduncle together usually overtopping the subtending leaf. **Sepals** (3.2)–4.2–5.2–(6.3) × 1.6–2.7 mm, lanceolate, with scarious margins 0.1–0.2 mm wide, with eglandular hairs 0.1 mm long on the abaxial side (and eglandular hairs 0.4–1.8 mm long on the margin), glabrous adaxially. **Petals** (3)–6–(8.1) × 1.4–4.2 mm, entire, without claw, glabrous on both sides, ciliate on the basal margin, purplish. **Filaments** 2.4–4.5 mm long, yellowish, glabrous on both sides, ciliate on the basal margin, with hairs up to 0.1–0.3 mm long; anthers 0.4–0.8 × 0.2–0.7 mm, yellowish. **Nectaries** glabrous. **Gynoecium** 2.5–4.8 mm long, yellowish. **Fruit** 13.1–20.6 mm long; mericarps 2.2–3.2 ×1.1–1.8 mm, smooth, with erect-patent, eglandular hairs 0.1–1.5 mm long, usually blackish; rostrum 8.8–15.1 mm long, without a narrowed apex, with erect-patent, eglandular hairs 0.1–1.1 mm long; stigmatic remains (0.6)–1–1.4–(1.6) mm long, with 5 hairy lobes. **Seeds** 1.6–2.2 × 0.9–1.6 mm, reticulate.

Geranium solanderi. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Geranium solanderi. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most frequently confused with *G. retrorsum* DC. from which it differs by the long hairs of the petiole and pedicel being straight, patent or curved and retrorse but never appressed rather than distinctively retrorse and appressed, and by the dorsal alveolae of the seed being mostly 5–6- rather than 4–6-sided, and up to >0.1 mm rather than c. 0.1 mm diameter. The rootstock of *G. retrorsum* is often turnip-shaped, whereas in *G. solanderi* the root is more like a long tapering parsnip or carrot.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigneous. North, South and Chatham Islands (including many northern offshore islands). Indigenous to Australia.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane (0-600 m a.s.l.). Formerly widespread in short tussock grasslands, on lava fields, clay pans and on rocky coastal headlands.

THREATS
It has declined from large parts of its former range due to rabbit browsing and the spread of taller, faster growing weeds. If these factors continue it may well qualify in the not too distant future as Threatened.

GENUS
Geranium

FAMILY
Geraniaceae

AUTHORITY
Geranium solanderi Carolin

SYNONYMS
Geranium dissectum var. pilosum Hook.f.; Geranium dissectum var. australe Benth.; Geranium carolinianum var. australe (Benth.) Fosberg; Geranium dissectum f. tasmanica Gand.; Geranium drummondii Carolin

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–April

FRUITING
October–June

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Seed dispersed by wind, ballistic projection and possibly attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed. Thrives in a sunny, well drained soil in full sun. It can become invasive but is easily controlled. A very attractive plant well worth cultivating.

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.
solanderi: Named after Daniel Carlsson Solander (19 February 1733 - 13 May 1782) who was a Swedish naturalist and an apostle of Carl Linnaeus.

NVS CODE
GERSOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 52

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, SO
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, SO
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, SO Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient 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, Fiz O, Alarcón ML, Navarro C, Aldasoro JJ. 2005. Taxonomic revision of *Geranium* sect. *Dissecta* (Geraniaceae). *Systematic Botany 30*: 533–558.
Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (14 April 2008). Description adapted from Aedo et al. (2005), supplemented with observations based on fresh and cultivated specimens.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Geranium solanderi Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/geranium-solanderi/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/geranium-solanderi/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026