

Geranium traversii

COMMON NAME

Chatham Island geranium

SYNONYMS

Geranium traversii var. *elegans* Cockayne

FAMILY

Geraniaceae

AUTHORITY

Geranium traversii Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

GERTRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 54, 54-56

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Chatham Islands group. Known from all the main islands, islets and rock stacks except The Forty Fours, Sisters, Pyramid and Western Reef.

HABITAT

Coastal cliffs, consolidated or mobile sand dunes, steep peat-filled crevices, limestone cliffs and rocks, rock crevices and erosion hollows.



Mangere Island. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Otauwae Point, Chatham Island. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Leafy, silvery grey to greyish-green, rosette-forming perennial herb forming patches up to 0.8 × 0.6 m. **Caulorrhiza** stout, deeply descending, woody at base, usually branched near ground level, often stoloniferous, up to 30 mm diameter, densely covered in persistent, frayed, petiole and stipule remnants. **Stem and leaves** usually densely covered in silvery hairs. **Basal leaves** on slender petioles up to 220 mm long. **Stipules** broad-ovate, cuspidate. **Lamina** 15–100 mm diameter, broad-reniform, orbicular, mostly lobed to ½ way but sometimes deeper; lobes 5–7–(8), cuneate, often toothed or lobed further. **Cauline leaves** similar but smaller. **Flowers** solitary 20–25–(30) mm diameter; peduncles up to 100 mm long, retrorsely hairy; bracteoles narrow-lanceolate, subacuminate. **Sepals** 7–11 × 2–4 mm, narrow-ovate to broad-ovate, densely covered with grey hairs, cuspidate. **Petals** 12–(16) × 10–(14) mm, broad-obovate or obovate-oblong, shortly clawed, pink or white, rarely pale purple, in all usually with up to 5 more darkly pigmented, longitudinal veins. **Stamens** < or > pistil. **Mericarps** silky hairy; beak 8–24 mm long. **Seed** 2.2–2.8 mm long, surface dull, dark brown, red-brown, dark purple-brown to black-brown, elliptic-oblong, not compressed, cells of primary reticulum, 4–6-sided, broadly oblong to isodiametric (0.04–0.15 mm long)

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all other indigenous and naturalised New Zealand geraniums by the stout rootstock and stems; by the leaves densely clad in more or less silvery hairs; and by the inflorescences bearing only sparse eglandular (never glandular) hairs with mainly pink or white (rarely pale purple) flowers with corollas up to 25 mm diameter.

FLOWERING

July–June (peaking in summer)

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

July–June

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Very amenable to cultivation thriving in most situations. Does not like excessive moisture and does best in full sun. In the wild it has a wide range of flower colours (white through pink to almost purple) and the leaves are occasional purple-coloured. Further selections may be rewarding. It is one of the few Chatham Islands endemics that is easily grown almost anywhere in New Zealand.

THREATS

Not threatened. However, it has probably declined from large parts of its former range on Chatham and Pitt Islands. In some sites it may be threatened by invasive weeds, especially marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*). It remains abundant and secure on all the outer vegetated islands except the Sisters, Forty Fours, Pyramid and Western Reef.

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.

traversii: Named after William Thomas Locke Travers (1819–1903) who was an Irish lawyer, magistrate, politician, explorer, naturalist, photographer. He lived in New Zealand from 1849 and was a fellow of the Linnean Society.

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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Aedo C, Navarro C, Alarcón ML. 2005: Taxonomic revision of *Geranium* sections *Andina* and *Chilensis* (Geraniaceae). *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 149: 1–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1095-8339.2005.00432.x>
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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/geranium-traversii/>