

Gratiola sexdentata

COMMON NAME

Gratiola

SYNONYMS

Gratiola glandulifera Colenso

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Gratiola sexdentata A.Cunn.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

GRASEX

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 90

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Widespread throughout the North and South Islands, can be locally common but often absent from large parts of the country

HABITAT

Lake, pond, tarn and river margins where it grows in marginal turf communities or on recently exposed mud or silt. Also present in wetlands where it grows along slow flowing streams, in pools of water or amongst sedges and reeds (but only in open sites it dislikes heavy shade). Occasionally collected from muddy pools within alluvial forest.



S. Arm, L. Manapouri. February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Lake Whangape. Photographer: Peter de Lange

FEATURES

Terrestrial to semi-aquatic glabrous to finely viscid-pubescent, erect to widely spreading perennial herb forming patches up to 300 x 300 mm. Stems mostly erect, stout, sparingly to heavily though laxly branched from base, dark purple or maroon often with dark spots or green with purple spots (rarely completely green). Leaves sessile to subsessile, opposite, 6-30 x 4-16 mm; dark green above with purple stitch marks along lamina (rarely bright green without stitch marks), undersides paler, often purple spotted; lamina ovate to lanceolate or suboblong, very rarely linear-lanceolate, margins entire, subentire or with distant fine, triangular-teeth. Flowers axillary on slender peduncles up to 10 mm long. Calyx-lobes 4-6 mm long, darkly purple-green, often with darker spots, or bright green; narrow-lanceolate, more or less attenuate, obtuse, to narrow ovate-lanceolate. Corolla 10-16 mm long, with corolla tube 8-14 mm long and corolla lips < tube; externally white often with a yellowish base, internally with a yellow throat, usually with 4-8 fine purple lines extending from lips to corolla base; rarely corolla completely white. Anthers connivent, cells parallel, transverse; staminodes filiform. Capsule c.5 mm long; dark purple-green with dark spotting or bright green, drying greyish; more or less ovoid-globose, initially fleshy, maturing chartaceous. Seeds numerous.

SIMILAR TAXA

Has been much confused with the South American *G. peruviana* and Australian *G. latifolia* but it does not seem to be close to either of these species, differing consistently by its smaller, ovate-lanceolate leaves with purple stitch marks along the margins, dark purple spotted glabrous to hairy stems, and longer, larger flowers. However, further study is needed. From the other New Zealand species it could perhaps be confused with *G. pubescens* but that species has all its vegetative parts covered in fine viscid hair. *G. pedunculata* is similar but has smaller pedicellate flowers, glandular sticky indumentum, no purple stitch marks on the leaves, and much smaller flowers. Small forms of *G. concinna* have also been confused with it.

FLOWERING

Year round

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

FRUITING

Year round

LIFE CYCLE

Mucilaginous seeds are dispersed by water and possibly wind and attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, rooted pieces or stem cuttings. Needs to grow in water.

ETYMOLOGY

gratiola: Little beauty

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Gratiola sexdentata - as currently circumscribed remains a highly variable species and this variation warrants further study.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 4 May 2006. Description by P.J. de Lange

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gratiola-sexdentata/>