Myosotis lyallii subsp. lyallii

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Compact, usually solitary rosette-forming perennial herb. Rosette-leaves c.15-35 × 4-7 mm, elliptic, elliptic-obovate to ovate-spathulate, petiole about equal in length to lamina, tip obtuse, sometimes apiculate; hairs flexuous, longer on margins, absent or very sparse on the leaf undersides. Lateral branches few, decumbent, rarely > 80 mm long, internodes equal to or less than length of leaves. Stem-leaves smaller and narrower than rosette-leaves, tip subacute; hairs flexuous, sparser on undersurface. Cymes usually simple, few-flowered, 10-20 mm long, bracts usually associated with lowermost 2-3 flowers; internodes usually less than calyx in fruit. Calyx 4-6 mm long, lobes cut to about half the length or less of calyx, subacute; hairs of several lengths, flexuous, long on margins. Corolla white, usually c.7-8 mm diameter, tube conspicuously longer than calyx, cylindric, lobes c.3 × 2 mm, oblong; filaments fixed between or just below scales, equal to or longer than anthers which are held wholly above scales; style c.2× calyx in fruit, stigma capitate. Nutlet 1.6-1.8 × 1.1-1.2 mm, ovate-elliptic, black.

Gertrude Valley. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

Gertrude Valley, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Myosotis lyallii is distinguished by the consistently exserted anthers (i.e. located above the corolla-scales), partially ebracteate cymes, and inflorescences of less than 8 narrow-tubed flowers (with up to 3 of the lowest bracteate), decumbent lateral branches which are rarely greater than 80 mm long, and by the adaxially copious flexuous rather than hooked or retrorse leaf hairs and abaxially near glabrous leaf surface.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North and South Islands

HABITAT
Subalpine to alpine in fellfield, cushion-bog, and solifluction lobes and bordering areas of snow-melt,

GENUS
Myosotis

FAMILY
Boraginaceae

AUTHORITY
Myosotis lyallii subsp. lyallii Hook.f.

SYNONYMS
Myosotis lyallii Hook.f. var. lyallii, Myosotis lyallii var. townsonii (Cheeseman) L.B.Moore, Myosotis townsonii Cheeseman

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Moore (in Allan 1961) recognised at the rank of variety M. lyallii var. townsonii (previously regarded as a species M. townsonii). This variety differs from var. lyallii by its laxer growth habit; rather sparser and more widely spaced hairs on the leaves and calyx; calyx lobes cut to about half the length of the calyx (mostly one third in var. lyallii) and by the anther filaments being wholly rather than partially exserted. Most botanists do not regard these differences as sufficient to maintain the two varieties and this view is followed here. Myosotis elderi accepted by the Flora of New Zealand treatments was in the view of the late A. P. Druce merely a northerly expression of M. lyallii. That unpublished opinion requires further study.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October - March

FRUITING
December - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed. However, plants are short-lived and prone to fungal diseases in humid climates.

ETYMOLOGY
myosotis: Mouse-eared
lyallii: Named after David Lyall (1817-1895), 19th century Scottish naturalist and surgeon with the Royal Navy, who explored Antarctica, New Zealand, the Arctic and North America and was a lifelong friend of Sir Joseph Hooker.

NVS CODE
MYOLSL

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp
2012 | Data Deficient
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: De, DPR, NS, Sp, St 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

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Goverment Printer, Wellington.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 February 2008. Description based on Allan (1961)
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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myosotis-lyallii-subsp-lyallii/

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