

Epilobium brevipes

COMMON NAMES

willowherb

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

A stout perennial herb with leathery, glabrous, red margined, elliptic to narrowly elliptic leaves, with remotely serrulate teeth. The species has erect white to pink flowers that are borne near the tip of the branches, with erect green to red capsules that are glabrous.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Basally woody, perennial herb forming densely branched reddish-green bushes up to 400 x 400 mm; stems often glossy, glabrous, or with a few strigulose hairs at junction of petiole margins. Petiole 3-9 mm long. Leaves coriaceous, opposite with the uppermost alternate, 13-26 x 4-8 mm, reddish green to red, narrowly elliptic to elliptic, apex acute with a blunt, globose, persistent apiculus, base acute; lamina surfaces glossy, lateral veins not evident when fresh (2-3 each side of midrib seen when dry); margins remotely serrulate bearing 4-10 teeth. Flowers erect. Pedicels 1-3 mm long. Ovaries 9-11 mm, glabrous. Floral tube 0.8-1.2 x 1.2-2.0 mm. Sepals 4.2-5.4 x 1.0-1.7 mm, not keeled, glabrous. Petals 6.7-7.4 x 3.8-4.6 mm, white flushing pink after anthesis, notch 1.7-2.0 mm deep. Anthers 0.6-0.8 x 0.4-0.6 mm, yellow; filaments of longer stamens 2.5-4 mm long, those of shorter 1.0-2.6 mm. Style 2.4-4.0 mm long, white; stigma 1.7-2.0 x 0.6-1.2 mm, white, clavate. Capsule 2.0-3.8 mm long, glabrous; pedicel elongating up to 10 mm at fruiting. Seeds 1.3-1.6 x 0.4-0.6 mm, brown, obovoid, smooth; coma 4 mm long, detaching readily.

SIMILAR TAXA

Rather similar to *E. petraeum* Heenan, which is a glabrescent shrub of similar habitats. The leaf apices of *E. petraeum* have obtuse to retuse rather than acute apices, and lack the distinct apiculus typical of *E. brevipes*. Another major difference is that the stem leaf junction of *E. petraeum* lacks the minute tuft of strigulose hairs seen in *E. brevipes*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, Marlborough (upper Awatere and Clarence Rivers and Kaikoura Ranges), north Canterbury (Waiu River, Hanmer) to Arthur's Pass and the Torlesse Range.

HABITAT

Lowland to alpine (300-1200 m a.s.l.). Inhabiting the sides of steep rocky gorges and sparsely vegetated, rubbly cliff faces and rock outcrops

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)



Inland Kaikoura Range, Marlborough.
Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken:
10/03/2015, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Seaward Kaikoura Range, North Canterbury.
Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken:
15/11/2015, Licence: All rights reserved.

THREATS

Although not regarded as threatened it has been suggested that the range of this species has contracted due to animal browse and through competition from weeds. Insufficient evidence is available to confirm this but should it be substantiated then this species may qualify as "At Risk. Declining".

DETAILED TAXONOMY

GENUS

Epilobium

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium brevipes Hook. f.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

December-February

FRUITING

January - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute papitate seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. An attractive rock garden and pot plant. However, like many epilobia it can potentially become invasive.

OTHER INFORMATION

ETYMOLOGY

epilobium: From the Greek epi- 'upon' and lobos 'a pod', the flowers appearing to be growing on the seed pod.

brevipes: Short foot

NVS CODE

EPIBRE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Raven, P.H.; Raven, T.E. 1976: The genus *Epilobium* in Australasia. New Zealand DSIR Bulletin 216. Wellington, Government Printer.

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

Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2011: *Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons*. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 10 May 2005. Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/epilobium-brevipes/>

PDF DATE

22 September 2025