

# Epilobium cinereum

## COMMON NAMES

willowherb

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

An erect much branched perennial plant, often with an overall reddish look. Leaves fairly small, grey-green to reddish, narrow elliptic, and covered in strigulose hair, with prominent and widely spaced teeth. Flowers very rarely white, often rose tinted, on a strigulose hairy ovary and pedicel.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect, much branched perennial or annual herb 0.15-0.60 m tall, often reddish-tinged, not obviously stoloniferous; plants strigulose, inflorescence, densely so, hairs comprising an admixture of glandular or non-glandular erect hairs often also present, the stems pubescent all round, conspicuously exfoliating and often somewhat woody near the base. Leaves mostly opposite alternate alternate in the upper half, grey-green, often tinged reddish, densely strigulose, the lateral veins visible to prominent, usually 3-5 on each side of the midrib; lamina 5.0-23.0 × 1.5-7.0 mm, linear to narrowly elliptic, apex subacute to acute or obtuse, base attenuate, margins coarsely serrate, bearing 1-8 teeth on each side, shortly pedunculate or subsessile. Inflorescence erect. Flowers erect. Ovary 10-24 mm long, on a pedicel 0-15 mm long, investiture usually densely though finely strigulose with an admixture of white or greyish-white, glandular or eglandular erect hairs. Floral tube 0.6-1.2 mm deep, 1.2-1.9 mm diameter, usually bearing a conspicuous ring of long hairs within. Sepals 2.5-7.5 × 0.8-1.7 mm, keeled, strigulose, bearing glandular or eglandular hairs also. Petals 3.5-12.0 × 2.0-6.5 mm, the notch 0.8-1.5 mm deep, rose-purple (very rarely white). Stamen filaments white of two types: long 1.5-5.0 mm long and short 1.0-4.5 mm. Anthers cream, 0.5-1.0 × 0.3-0.52 mm. Style 2.5-9.0 mm long, white. Stigma 1.5-4.0 × 0.9-1.5 mm, white, clavate, surrounded by (very rarely held well above) the anthers at anthesis. Capsule 30-68 mm long, densely strigulose, indumentum comprising an admixture of glandular and eglandular erect hairs; pedicel 6-20 mm long. Seeds 0.8-1.0 × 0.3-0.4 mm, brown, reticulate-mammillate to reticulate-papillose, obovoid, chalazal callus absent, apex rounded (not beaked); coma 7.0-10.5 mm long, white, breaking off readily.



Te rerenga, Coromandel. Dec. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Te rerenga, Coromandel. Dec. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Epilobium cinereum* is easily distinguished from all other epilobia except the threatened *E. hirtigerum* on account of its upright, heavily branched growth habit, finely puberulent, greyish (often red-tinged) stems, foliage, pedicels and capsules, and dark rose-purple flowers which open widely at anthesis. *Epilobium hirtigerum* is usually easily distinguished from *E. cinereum* on account of its larger overall size, glabrous stoloniferous winter growth habit, and by the stem hairs which in *E. hirtigerum* are in mixtures of long, spreading eglandular, shorter glandular and strigulose hairs. In the North Island at least, *E. hirtigerum* is further distinguished by its smaller, consistently white flowers which scarcely open.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Also Australia (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania). Naturalised at least on the Hawaiian Islands if not elsewhere in the Pacific.

## HABITAT

Coastal to upper montane. In open, often dryer habitats on banks and rock outcrops, as well as around lake, river and ephemeral wetland margins. Often a prominent urban weed, especially in derelict properties, old car yards, and in car parks. In these habitats it often associates with *Epilobium ciliatum*, *E. hirtigerum*, *E. tetragonum* and *Lachnagrostis filiformis*.

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

## DETAILED TAXONOMY

### FAMILY

Onagraceae

### AUTHORITY

*Epilobium cinereum* A.Rich.

### SYNONYMS

*Epilobium billardiereanum* subsp. *cinereum* (A.Rich.) P.H.Raven et Engelhorn

### TAXONOMIC NOTES

Raven & Raven (1976) prefer to treat *Epilobium cinereum* as *E. billardierianum* subsp. *cinereum*. However, irrespective of their comments for Australia it is clear that in New Zealand *E. cinereum* is a widespread, morphologically stable unit that is only occasionally seen sympatric (and even syntopic) with the ecologically and morphologically distinct *E. billardierianum*. Further hybrids between both subspecies and *E. billardierianum* are as yet unknown from New Zealand, although Raven & Raven (1976) suggest that they are frequent in Australia. From a New Zealand perspective it is difficult to accept such morphologically distinct species as subspecies because of their reported behavior in Australia. Also, as with any *Epilobium*, given an opportunity hybridism is likely to happen, even with distinct relatives, as it is the main driver for speciation in the Australasian representatives of the genus. In this regard Raven & Raven (1976) are inconsistent, accepted at species rank other epilobia, which following their treatment of *E. billardierianum* should also be regarded as subspecies, or even merged.

### ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

### ENDEMIC GENUS

No

### ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

### ECOLOGY

### FLOWERING

September - May

## FRUITING

October - July

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very weedy and probably best not cultivated as it is inclined to spread rapidly. *Epilobium cinereum* is a common urban weed in many cities and towns of eastern New Zealand

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

## OTHER INFORMATION

### ETYMOLOGY

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

**cinereum:** Ash-grey

### NVS CODE

EPIBSC

### CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

### PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## 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.

Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

### ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 22 August 2011. Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

### NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

### MORE INFORMATION

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

### PDF DATE

31 October 2024