

Epilobium elegans

COMMON NAME

willowherb

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium elegans Petrie

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

EPIELE

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Data Deficient

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Data Deficient

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

A little known species very similar to *Epilobium tenuipes*, characterised by small stature, with leaves and flowers that are larger than those found in *E. tenuipes*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Marlborough to Otago, east of the main divide).

HABITAT

Lowland to montane in short (*Festuca*, *Poa* and *Rytidosperma*) and tall (*Chionochloa*-dominated) grassland and tussockland. In open ground often amongst *Raoulia* mats. Also found within braided river beds.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial tufted herb. **Stems** simple to sparingly branched, slender 50–150 mm long, initially prostrate and rooting at nodes then ascending and becoming erect at tips; bifariously pubescent. **Leaves** opposite, crowded and overlapping in lower part, alternate within inflorescence portion of stem, sessile to subsessile; lamina 10–20 × 2–4 mm; light green, linear, narrow-elliptic to narrow-lanceolate, obtuse to subacute, membranous, glabrous, margins finely and obscurely denticulate or entire. **Flowers** erect, solitary or few, up to ± 8 mm diameter; sepals linear to very narrow-ovate; petals white, deeply lobed, ± 2× length of sepals. **Capsules** 20–30 mm long, reddish to pale brown, narrowed at apex, glabrous; pedicels elongated to 50 mm or more at maturity. **Seeds** smooth.



Island Saddle, Molesworth. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 28/01/2018, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Island Saddle, Molesworth. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 28/01/2018, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Allied to *Epilobium tenuipes* from which it differs by its longer (10–20 mm cf. 5–10 mm in *E. tenuipes*), slightly broader (2–4 mm cf. 1–3 mm in *E. tenuipes*) leaves, larger flowers (up to 8 mm diameter in *E. elegans*, up to 4 mm diameter in *E. tenuipes*), glabrous rather glabrous to finely puberulent longer capsules (20–30 mm cf. 15–25 mm long in *E. tenuipes*) and consistently smooth rather smooth or minutely reticulate seeds.

FLOWERING

October–March

FRUITING

December–May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Inclined to become weedy.

ETYMOLOGY

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

elegans: Elegant

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Raven & Raven (1976) treat *Epilobium elegans* as part of the natural variation within their concept of *Epilobium alsinoides* subsp. *tenuipes* (Hook.f.) P.H.Raven et Engelhorn (which is treated here as a species—*E. tenuipes* Hook.f.). Species rank for *E. elegans* is preferred because this species is commonly found growing sympatrically with *E. tenuipes* from which it remains morphologically distinct. In this respect the species concepts of the late A.P. Druce are followed (Druce 1993).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 September 2011. Description adapted from Allan (1961).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.
- Druce AP. 1993. Indigenous vascular plants of New Zealand. Ninth Revision. Unpublished Checklist held at Landcare Research, Lincoln, New Zealand.
- Raven PH, Raven TE. 1976. The genus *Epilobium* in Australasia. *New Zealand DSIR Bulletin 216*. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 321 p.
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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