

# Epilobium elegans

## COMMON NAMES

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

## SIMPLIFIED 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 papitate 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

## 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). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

## 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/>

## PDF DATE

27 September 2024