

# Epilobium hectorii

## COMMON NAMES

willowherb

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, gracile, perennial herb 50-250 mm tall, often much-branched from base, perennating from basal buds; plants ± densely covered throughout with short, crisp, erect or appressed hairs, mostly confined to lines decurrent from the margins of the petioles, especially on upper part of stem. Leaves opposite, a few in inflorescence alternate, longer than or equal to the stem internodes; lateral veins not prominent, 2-3 on each side of the midrib; petiole 0-3 mm; lamina 3-20 × 1-4 mm, dull bluish-green to bronze-green, narrowly elliptic, base attenuate, apex subacute to rounded, serrulate with 0-10 weak teeth on each side. Inflorescence erect, the flowers often distributed well down the stem. Flowers erect. Ovaries 6-14 mm long, finely and uniformly strigulose, pedicellate, pedicels 1-6 mm long. Floral tube 0.6-1.3 × 1.2-2.0 mm, adaxially strigulose. Sepals 1.6-4.5 × 0.7-1.2 mm, ovate-lanceolate, not keeled, strigulose. Petals 2.5-8.2 × 1.8-4.3 mm, white, sometimes whitish-pink, if white then flushing pink after pollination, notch 0.9-1.4 mm deep. Stamen filaments white, of two types: long (0.5-3.2 mm long) and short (0.3-1.5 mm long). Anthers 0.5-1.2 × 0.3-0.5 mm, cream. Style 0.8-4.9 mm long, white; stigma 0.8-1.9 × 0.4-0.6 mm, white, clavate, surrounded by the longer or both sets of stamens at anthesis. Capsule 18-28 mm long, glaucescent, strigulose (rarely sparsely so) with denser lines of hairs conspicuous along edges of valves and sometimes with a green line along valve dehiscence, on a pedicel 13-27 mm long. Seeds 0.8-1.3 mm long, orange to orange-brown, oblong-obovate to obovate, apex rounded, base subacute, finely reticulate; coma 4-6 mm long, white, caducous.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Epilobium hectorii* is distinguished from other epilobia by the glaucescent to bronze-green leaves which are longer or equal to the internodes and narrowly elliptic, bearing 0-10 weak teeth either side; erect inflorescences; white (rarely whitish-pink) petals at anthesis; abaxially glabrous floral tube; by the absence of glandular hairs on the ovary, which is otherwise invested in fine, uniformly strigulose hairs; by the glaucescent, strigulose, capsules ranging from 18-28 mm long; and by the finely reticulate seeds. It is most similar to *Epilobium krulleanum* which was included within it by Raven & Raven (1976) but which is maintained here as a species. From *Epilobium hectorii*, *E. krulleanum* differs by its larger pink flowers whose petals range from 5.6-9.0 × 3.8-5.5 mm, and with a deeper notch (1.2-1.6 mm cf. 0.9-1.4 mm in *E. hectorii*), and by the seeds which are 1.3-1.8 mm long, brown, obovate and rather conspicuously papillate, and furnished with a longer coma (6-8 mm cf. 4-6 mm long in *E. hectorii*). *Epilobium krulleanum* is less widespread than *E. hectorii* being chiefly found in the intermontane basins of the upper Awatere and Clarence Rivers, South Marlborough, as well as the intermontane basins of Canterbury.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands from the Central Volcanic Plateau and Kaimanawa Ranges south to Southland with a mainly easterly distribution.

## HABITAT

Montane to alpine on open stony ground, within braided river beds, in tussock grassland, in frost flats and then often within ablation areas.

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)



## DETAILED TAXONOMY

### GENUS

Epilobium

### FAMILY

Onagraceae

### AUTHORITY

Epilobium hectorii Hausskn.

### ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

### ENDEMIC GENUS

No

### ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## ECOLOGY

### FLOWERING

November - February

### FRUITING

December - April

### LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

### PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Dislikes humid conditions.

## OTHER INFORMATION

### WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

### ETYMOLOGY

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

**hectorii**: Named after Sir James Hector, 19th century New Zealand geologist and botanist who was originally from Scotland

### NVS CODE

EPIHEC

### CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2024 | At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, NStr, RR, Sp, TL 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 "[Regional conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Otago](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2024) report.

## 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 (4 September 2011). Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

### MORE INFORMATION

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

### PDF DATE

22 September 2025