

# Caltha obtusa

## COMMON NAME

White caltha

## SYNONYMS

*Psychrophila obtusa* (Cheeseman) W.A.Weber

## FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Caltha obtusa* Cheeseman

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## NVS CODE

CALOBT

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island (from Canterbury southwards)

## HABITAT

In alpine flushes, seepages, around tarns and slow flowing streams. Also found seen in damp areas in open grassland and in similar sites in fell field and herb field

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Glabrous rhizomatous perennial herb of alpine flushes, seepages, bogs and stream sides. Plants forming a compact turf, when flowering with scapes 20-60 mm tall. Rhizomes stout, fleshy, shortly-creeping, white. Leaves radical, clustered; petioles 8-12 mm long, slender; lamina seldom 8-12 × 7.5-11.0 mm, dark green to yellow green, usually unblemished, sometimes marked with darker bronze blotches and/or streaks, broadly oblong to suborbicular, base 2-lobed, subcordate, apex emarginate, margins crenate to crenate-dentate; lobes upturned, ± appressed to and not much shorter than lamina, crenate. Scapes stout, initially subsessile to sessile, soon elongating, and then up to 60 mm tall. Sepals 5, 8-18 × 6-12 mm, white, obovate, obtuse to acute. Stamens 10-15; carpels narrow-ovate in outline; styles rather long, slender. Ripe heads 12-18 mm diameter. Seeds 2-5 per follicle, 1.2- 1.5 mm long, glossy red-brown to dark purple brown, ovate to broadly ovate, ovate-elliptic or elliptic.



Old Man range, December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



*Psychrophila obtusa*. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Only reliably distinguished from other, small, alpine *Ranunculus* when flowering. From *Caltha novae-zelandiae* readily distinguished when flowering by the oblong-obovate white rather than linear-subulate yellow flowers, and vegetatively by the leaf margins which are crenate rather than shallowly sinuate to entire. Both *Caltha obtusa* and *C. novae-zelandiae* are easily distinguished from the uncommon, naturalised marsh marigold (*C. palustris*) by their much smaller size, turf-forming growth habit, ecology, and features of the foliage and flowers.

## FLOWERING

December - February

## FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

## FRUITING

February - April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Can be grown in a pot but needs to be kept moist, free of bryophytes and algal growth. Needs plenty of light but resents high temperatures and humidity

## ETYMOLOGY

**caltha:** From the Greek kalathos 'goblet', refers to the form of the flower

**obtusa:** Blunt

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

New Zealand plants had long been placed in the genus *Caltha*, they were then referred to *Psychrophila*, a decision which was over ruled on the basis of a detailed study by Schuettpelez & Hoot (2004).

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (28 March 2012). Description by P.J. de Lange.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Schuettpelez, E.; Hoot, S.B. 2004: Phylogeny and biogeography of *Caltha* (Ranunculaceae) based on chloroplast and nuclear DNA sequences. *American Journal of Botany* 91(2): 247-253.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/caltha-obtusa/>