

Epilobium chionanthum

COMMON NAME

marsh willowherb

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium chionanthum Hauss.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

EPICHI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Gradual Decline

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North, South and Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

In swamps and wet swards of grasses or sedges, beside lakes or rivers, and in bogs. Lowland to upland, mostly below 900m a.s.l.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



Epilobium chionanthum, Ihupuku, Waverley.
Dec 1999. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle,
Licence: CC BY-NC.



Herbarium specimen. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Loosely clumped perennial herb up to 0.75 m tall, producing numerous leafy stolons above and below ground; stems often reddish, mostly glabrous, strigulose along lines decurrent from the margins of the petioles below and all round above and in the inflorescence, more rarely pubescent all round to the base. Leaves much shorter than the internodes they subtend, mostly opposite, a few alternate in the inflorescence, dull green, paler beneath, the lateral veins quite prominent, 3-4 on each side of the midrib, subsessile; lamina 12-40 × 7-15 mm, elliptic to ovate, acute at the apex, narrowly cuneate to rounded at the base, margins serrulate, usually with 7-14 often obscure teeth on each side. Inflorescence erect. Flowers erect. Ovary 10-20 mm long, investiture mixed glandular and strigulose, on a pedicel 2-7 mm long. Floral tube 1.0-1.7 × 1.4-1.8 mm. Sepals 4.0-5.2 × 1.5-1.7 mm, slightly keeled, indumentum of mixed glandular and strigulose hairs. Petals 6.0-11.0 × 4.5-6.0 mm, notch 0.8-1.3 mm deep, white, often flushed pink at fertilisation. Stamens filaments white, of two types: long (2.0-3.5 mm long) and short (0.8-1.3 mm long), Anthers 1.3-1.5 × 0.6-0.7 mm, bright yellow. Style 5.2-9.0 mm long, white, stigma 1.0-2.0 × 0.9-2.0 mm, globose, obscurely 4-lobed, held above anthers in early anthesis. Capsule 40-60 mm long on a pedicel 12-28 mm long, moderately to densely strigulose and glandular. Seeds 1.4-1.8 mm long, dark brown, narrowly obovate to obovate, finely reticulate to reticulate-mamillate; coma 7.5-11.0 mm long, orange to orange-brown, persistent.

SIMILAR TAXA

Other *Epilobium* species. *E. chionanthum* has large flowers and hairless, dull green leaves with tiny teeth.

FLOWERING

October - March

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

November - April

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Tends to be short-lived and resents competition.

THREATS

At risk from wetland drainage and the spread of invasive weeds. Some populations have been destroyed by coastal development.

ETYMOLOGY

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

chionanthum: Snowy-white flower

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 28 August 2011. Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/epilobium-chionanthum/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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