

# Epilobium gracilipes

## FAMILY

Onagraceae

## AUTHORITY

Epilobium gracilipes Kirk

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## NVS CODE

EPIGRA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Maungapohatu (Te Urewera) south but scarce), South Island.

## HABITAT

*Epilobium gracilipes* is a basicolous species confined to limestone, marble and other associated calcareous rocks (there is one known occurrence on andesite rocks on Mt Ruapehu). It is known from montane to alpine habitats (strictly subalpine to alpine in the North Island), and favours sheltered cliff faces and crevices in open forest, shrubland or grassland. Although *E. gracilipes* has a highly disjunct distribution it is usually abundant at the sites in which it has been found.



In cultivation ex NW Ruahine Range. Dec 1977.  
Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dark reddish-tinged, decumbent perennial herb bearing numerous leafy stems and forming clumped, matted patches up to 200 mm diameter. **Plants** with lines of erect or appressed non-glandular hairs decurrent from the margins of the petioles. **Leaves** mostly opposite, alternate in the inflorescence, thick, fleshy lustrous, dark green tinged red or bright red above, usually bright red below, lateral veins not prominent, 2–3 on each side of midrib; petioles 1.2 mm long; lamina 5–18 × 3–10 mm (often equal in length to the internodes they subtend), narrowly ovate or ovate, apex rounded, obtuse to acute, base truncate, margins revolute, coarsely, remotely serrulate, teeth absent or up to 4 either side. **Inflorescences** 1–3–(8)-flowered, glabrous, borne in the axils of the upper leaves, nodding; flowers nodding, ovaries erect. **Ovaries** 8–18 mm long, on glabrous pedicels 10–34 mm long. **Floral tube** 0.5–1.5 × 0.9–1.4 mm, glabrous. **Sepals** keeled, 3.6–4.6 × 0.8–1.1 mm, glabrous. **Petals** 3.5–6.4 × 2.5–4.5 mm, white (sometimes flushed pink), the notch 0.7–1.8 mm deep. **Anthers** 0.6–0.8 × 0.35–0.45 mm, yellow; filaments white, those of the longer stamens 1.5–3.5 mm long, those of the shorter 1.0–1.5 mm long, the anthers of both pairs or the longer ones only shedding pollen directly onto stigma after the flower opens. **Style** 2.2–3.6 mm long, white; stigma 1.0–1.5 × 0.7–0.8 mm, white, clavate. **Capsule** 28–50 mm long, on pedicels 17–60 mm long. **Seeds** 1.1–1.5 mm long, brown to grey-brown or orange-brown, oblong-obovate to obovate, finely reticulate-mamillate; coma 3.0–7.0 mm long, white, persistent or caducous.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Epilobium gracilipes* is a very distinctive species easily recognised by its ecological preference for base-rich (usually limestone, marble and associated calcareous rock), and by the combination of having a decumbent, clumped growth habit, stems with pubescent lines decurrent from the petiole margins, thick, fleshy, glossy, dark green, red-tinged or bright red leaves (with distinctive red undersides), and nodding flowers.

## FLOWERING

November–March

## FRUITING

January–May

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

*Epilobium gracilipes* is a very attractive species well suited for cultivation in a rock garden. For best results it should be planted on or near some limestone rock, or given regular applications of lime. It prefers a sunny, well drained situation or plants are inclined to suffer from powdery mildew. Unlike many other epilobias *E. gracilipes* is not inclined to be weedy. Plants may be short-lived. Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**gracilipes**: Derived from the Latin words gracilis meaning 'slender' and pes meaning 'foot'

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (28 October 2012). Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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>.

Webb CJ, Simpson MJA. 2001. Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch. 428 p.

### **NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION**

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

### **MORE INFORMATION**

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