

Epilobium gunnianum

COMMON NAME

Gunn's willowherb

SYNONYMS

Epilobium diversifolium Hausskn., *Epilobium erosum* Hausskn.

FAMILY

Onagraceae

AUTHORITY

Epilobium gunnianum Hausskn.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

2009 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

2004 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand known only from the South Island at Maungarakau Swamp, north-west Nelson, and from swamps near Westport and Cape Foulwind. Also in Australia where it is common from southeastern Queensland south to Victoria and Tasmania.

HABITAT

Coastal or lowland (0-30 m a.s.l.), where it inhabits moderately fertile to mesic wetlands dominated by raupo (*Typha orientalis* C.Presl), sedges and sphagnum moss.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



Herbarium specimen AK 129259. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Herbarium specimen AK 129259. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect perennial herb forming bushy masses up to 0.8 m tall. Plants often heavily branched right from base, with the basal stock producing numerous leafy stolons. Stems completely covered in strigose hairs, with elevated lines decurrent from the petiole margins, especially within the inflorescence. Petiole 1-3 mm long. Leaves initially opposite becoming subalternate and then alternately within the inflorescence; glabrescent to glabrous with midvein, basal margins usually finely strigulose; rarely leaves completely strigulose hairy; lamina 10-60 x 2-20 mm, dull green to grey-green or bright green, narrowly elliptic or elliptic, rarely lanceolate or narrowly ovate, apex obtuse to subacute, base subcordate to acute; lamina margins usually undulating, serrulate or erose-denticulate with up to 40 teeth; lateral veins prominent, usually 4-6 on each side of midrib. Inflorescence and flowers erect.

SIMILAR TAXA

Best distinguished from other wetland inhabiting epilobia by the seeds which have a distinct pale rim - unique to this species in New Zealand. It could be confused with *E. pallidiflorum* A.Cunn., but that species has narrower lanceolate leaves and more usually white rather than pink flowers, and the seeds are without rims.

FLOWERING

December - March

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Violet/Purple

FRUITING

January - April

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 invasive.

THREATS

Unknown. First recorded from New Zealand in 1976 based on gatherings made as early as 1953. Its exact status is not clear though it has been confirmed as present in the Maungarakau Swamp at least as recently as 2000. In the Westport area many of the swamps it was recorded from have been destroyed but it was also found growing in drainage ditches, drains and channels near Cape Foulwind. It probably survives in that area and has simply been overlooked. It is not a big plant and being a somewhat weedy species it is easily overlooked or mistaken for a naturalised *Epilobium*. Abundant in Australia.

ETYMOLOGY

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 6 January 2008. 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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MORE INFORMATION

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