Epilobium komarovianum

COMMON NAME
creeping willowherb

SYNONYMS
Epilobium nummularifolium var, brevipes Hook.f.; Epilobium nummularifolium var. minimum Kirk, Epilobium nerteroides var. minimum (Kirk) Cockayne, Epilobium inornatum Melville, Epilobium inornatum var. brevipes (Hook.f.) Melville

FAMILY
Onagraceae

AUTHORITY
Epilobium komarovianum H.Lev

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE
EPIKOM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

Tarndale, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Bostaquet Bay, Kawau, 30 June 2005. Photographer: Mike Wilcox, Licence: All rights reserved.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand North, South, Stewart and Chatham islands. Uncommon in the northern half of the North Island.
Also, naturalised in Great Britain, Ireland, Europe and the United States.

HABITAT
A species of open, flushes, seepages, and places where water seasonally ponds. Also a component of lake shore and coastal turf, and open riverbeds.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Creeping perennial herb forming mats up to 1 m diameter, these tightly appressed to ground. Plants subglabrous or sparsely furnished with round-tipped, appressed, antrorse (occasionaly admixed with appressed retrorse) eglandular hairs in lines decurrent from the margins of the petioles, on the ovaries, capsules, pedicels, sepals, and sometimes on the adaxial and abaxial leaf surfaces of the foliage near the branch terminals. Flowers arising individually from the leaf axils, the stems continuing to grow and root beyond the point where flowers are produced. Leaves opposite, distant to crowded and imbricate, frequently reflexed, dull reddish-green to coppery, adaxially rugose-impressed, bearing 1-4 lateral veins on each side of the midrib; lamina 2.0-12.0 × 1.5-9.0 mm, usually orbicular, but occasionally oblong or ovate (sometimes with all forms on the same plant), apices subacute to obtuse, base attentuate to obtuse, entire or occasionally with 1-3 remote, weak teeth on each side of leaf; subsessile or with petioles up to 3 mm long. Flowers erect. Ovaries green to red-brown, 2.5-12.0 mm long, subglabrous or sparsely hairy, if hairs present these sometimes denser along value edges; pedicels 1-7(-38) mm long, the flowers falling before full pedicel elongation. Floral tube 0.4-1.0 mm deep, 1.0-1.6 mm diameter, subglabrous or sparsely hairy. Sepals not keeled, glabrous or sparsely hairy, 1.5-2.5 × 6.5-1.0 mm. Petals white, 2-4(-5) × 0.9-2.5(-3.0) mm, notch 0.7-1.2 mm deep. Anthers yellow, 0.35-0.8 × 0.25-0.6 mm, filaments of longer stamens 0.3-1.2 mm long, those of shorter 0.2-0.4 mm, generally both shedding pollen directly on the stigma at or before anthesis. Style white 1.1-1.8(-3.0) mm long; stigma white, clavate or capitate, 0.6-1.1 × 0.5-0.8 mm. Capsule subglabrous or sparsely furnished with hairs, 4-30 mm long, borne on a pedicel 3-93(-135) mm long. Seeds brown, 0.5-0.9(-1.1) × 0.25-0.4 mm, obovoid, smooth; coma 3.0-4.5. mm long, readily detaching.

SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive species that differs from *E. brunnescens*, and all other small *Epilobium* species except *E. angustum*, by having rugose-impressed (dimpled) adaxial (upper) leaf surfaces. It is often confused with *E. angustum* as both species have similar reddish or copper-tinged leaves with adaxially rugose-impressure surfaces. *Epilobium angustum* is distinguished from *E. komarovianum* by the glandular pubescent pedicels, ovaries, sepals and capsules (those of *E. komarovianum* are subglabrate to very sparsely eglandular hairy), and the seeds have a well marked cellular rim absent in *E. komarovianum*. *Epilobium komarovianum* has also been much confused with *E. nummularifolium*, a species with smooth rather than rugose-impressed adaxial leaf surfaces; consistently serrulate rather than entire or weakly and sparingly toothed leaves, and yellow-green, rather then red-green or copper-coloured leaves. The capsules of *E. nummularifolium* are grey-strigulose rather than subglabrate to sparsely hairy.

FLOWERING

October to March

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

December to May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and seed. An attractive species that has proved popular in cultivation overseas. This species can, in suitable situations self-establish and has the potential to be a troublesome weed - as has proved the case in the U.K., Ireland, Europe and the United States of America (Raven & Raven 1976).

ETYMOLOGY

epilobium: From the Greek epi- ‘upon’ and lobos ‘a pod’, the flowers appearing to be growing on the seed pod.
komarovianum: After Kormarov

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 December 2019). Description adapted from Raven & Raven (1976).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Raven, P.H.; Raven, T.E. 1976: The genus *Epilobium* in Australasia. New Zealand DSIR Bulletin 216. Wellington, Government Printer.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/epilobium-komarovianum/