

Sebaea ovata

COMMON NAME

Sebaea

SYNONYMS

Exacum ovatum Labill., *Gentiana ovata* Dietr

FAMILY

Gentianaceae

AUTHORITY

Sebaea ovata (Labill.) R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

SEBOVA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = c.54$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, EF, SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP, EF, SO

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, SO, EF

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand formerly known from both North and South Islands, now confined to two natural populations in the North Island near Wanganui, and two deliberately established populations on the remote Pouto Peninsula, near Dargaville. Present also in Australia (South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania) where it is very common.

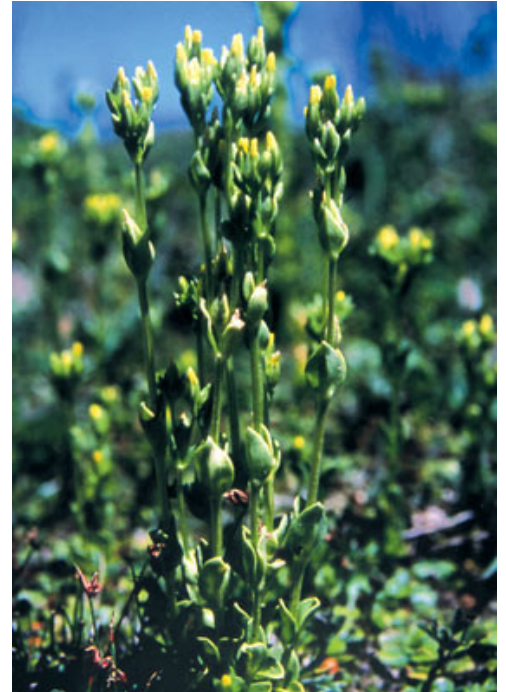
HABITAT

Coastal. Associated with damp, sparsely-vegetated dune slacks, depressions, and associated sand plains. In Australia more widespread, ranging from the coast inland to montane forest, often but not exclusively in seasonally damp ground.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).



A mature plant of *Sebaea ovata*. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Sebaea ovata. Photographer: A. J. Townsend, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Annual, sparingly branched, erect herb, 50–300 mm tall. Stems 4-angled, hairless, pale yellow-green. Leaves, sessile, in opposite pairs, 6.5 x 15 x 5–10 mm, fleshy, pale green to almost blue-green, ovate to broadl-ovate or suborbicular, apex obtuse to subacute, well spaced along stem; midrib prominent, with one conspicuous longitudinal vein either side. Inflorescence a mainly terminal cyme, with a few solitary flowers borne within the subtending leaf axils. Flowers 6.5 mm long, scarcely opening; calyx-lobes 5, narrowly ovate-lanceolate, acute with rigid narrowly winged keel. Corolla tube 4 mm, straight, pale yellow, corolla lobes 5, 3 mm long, pale yellow, linear-lanceolate to lanceolate, often twisted. Ovary 2-locular. Capsules ovoid-ellipsoid, 5 mm long. Seeds fine, dust-like.

SIMILAR TAXA

Two introduced weeds, centuary (*Centaurium erythraea* Rafn. and *C. tenuiflorum* (Hoffm. et Link) Fritsch) and *Blackstonia perfoliata* (L.) Hudson occupy the same habitat, and are superficially similar. Centuary can be distinguished by its pink to deep rose flowers, whose anthers spirally twist after anthesis, and by the 1-locular rather than 2-locular ovary. *Blackstonia perfoliata* is most common in Northland and is much larger than *Sebaea* and has blue-green, ovate or oblong-ovate, cordate leaves,

FLOWERING

November - January

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

FRUITING

December - February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Can be grown from fresh seed. Not especially easy to grow, requiring specialist knowledge to successfully germinate and maintain plants.

THREATS

Though formerly ranging from near Hokianga Harbour in the North Island to Lake Ellesmere in the South Island, by the 1980s *S. ovata* was known from only two sites near Wanganui. At both locations it is seriously at risk from weed encroachment, caused in part by changing water levels in the adjacent dune systems but also due to the release of rabbit calicivirus, which having locally eliminated rabbits, facilitated the spread of weeds normally suppressed by these animals into suitable *Sebaea* habitat. At both locations *Sebaea* is being maintained only by diligent management. This management has involved weed spraying and the construction of fresh habitats using a bull dozer.

Story in [Trilepidea Issue 28](#) (March 2006)

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available. Plants are held by two botanic gardens, one university and several specialist growers.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange 20 October 2003. Description based on Allan (1961) supplemented with observations made from fresh and/or dried herbarium specimens

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan. H.H. 1961: *Flora of New Zealand*. Vol. I, Government Printer, Wellington.

[Growth and habitat of *Sebaea ovata* \(Gentianaceae\) in New Zealand and Australia](#) by P.D. Champion, D.E Hofstra, M.E. Auger, and C.E.C. Gemmill.

[Ogle, C.C. 1989. *Sebaea ovata* and its habitat near Wanganui. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 45: 92-99](#)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/sebaea-ovata/>