

# Verbena officinalis

## COMMON NAMES

vervain

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Annual or short-lived perennial; stems to 80 cm tall, square, often scabrid on angles. Most **leaves** variously pinnatifid or pinnatisect (basal ones often deeply toothed), mostly petiolate (uppermost often sessile), sometimes scabrid, with hairs little swollen at base; lamina 3-6 × 1-4 cm, ± rhombic or oblanceolate; lobes oblong or ovate; veins not impressed above; base ± attenuate; apex obtuse to acute. Infl. very loosely paniculate; spikes to c. 15 cm long at maximum flowering, elongating to 25 cm at fruiting, slender, puberulent; fls soon becoming distant. **Bracts**  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{2}{3}$  length of calyx, lanceolate to ovate, somewhat keeled, acuminate, hairy. **Calyx** 2–3 mm long, hairy; teeth acute, green or mauvish. **Corolla** tube > calyx, somewhat hairy outside; limb 4–5 mm diam., mauve or lavender, drying a similar colour. **Nutlets** c. 2 mm long, oblong, reddish brown, strongly ribbed dorsally, finely white-papillate and flattened ventrally.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Most similar to *V. littoralis* but separated by the pinnatifid to pinnatisect leaves; usually densely glandular inflorescence axis, and spikes 10–35–(40) cm long, not contracted.

## DISTRIBUTION

**North Island; South Island:** widespread and common, rarer North of the Volcanic Plateau.

## HABITAT

Roadsides, stony river banks, street gutters, and other waste and open disturbed places, sometimes open or depleted pastures, up to 900 m.

## GENUS

Verbena

## FAMILY

Verbenaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Verbena officinalis* L.

## FLOWERING

November–March



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## YEAR NATURALISED

1867

## ORIGIN

Europe, N. Africa, W. Asia

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

## ETYMOLOGY

**officinalis**: From the Latin officina shortened from opificina which originally meant 'workshop' but later came to mean a monastic storeroom, herb-room or pharmacy. Refers to the plant's real or perceived medicinal value.

## NVS CODE

VEROFF

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ. 1988. Flora of New Zealand, Volume IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Botany Division, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Christchurch, NZ. 1365 p.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by Marley Ford (5 March 2022). Brief description and Distribution sections are copied from Webb *et al.* (1988).

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/verbena-officinalis/>

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026