

# Veronica armstrongii

## COMMON NAME

Armstrong's Whipcord

## SYNONYMS

*Leonohebe armstrongii* (J.B.Armstr.) Heads, *Veronica armstrongii* Kirk nom. superfl., nom. illeg., *Hebe armstrongii* (J.B.Armstr.) Cockayne et Allan

## FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Veronica armstrongii* J.B.Armstr.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees & Shrubs

## NVS CODE

HEBARM

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 84$

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RF, RR

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RF

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Spreading low shrub bearing untidy narrow short scaly twigs inhabiting the mountain valleys of western Canterbury. Twigs 1.5-2mm wide. Leaves scale-like, pointed, clasping stem, with a hairy margin (lens needed). Flowers white, in groups of 6-8 at tips of twigs.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, Canterbury. Initially recorded from the headwaters of the Rangitata River where it now seems to be extinct. Populations are now known from near Castlehill and in the Nigger Valley. Past records from North West Nelson are based *H. ochracea* M.B.Ashwin, those from the Clarence, *H. hectorii* (Hook.f.) Cockayne et Allan, and those from Kurow seem to be the result of accidental inclusion of cultivated specimens with a wild collection of *H. annulata* (Petrie) Cockayne et Allan.



Enys Scientific Reserve. Photographer: G.M. Crowcroft



Enys Scientific Reserve, in netted enclosure, December 1994. Photographer: G. M. Crowcroft

## HABITAT

Apparently confined to bog pine (*Halocarpus bidwillii*) dominated vegetation growing on river terraces, along tarn margins and on small islands within tarns. Seems to require seasonally high water tables, or at least habitats with moderately high levels of available moisture.

## FEATURES

Bushy whipcord hebe up 1 x 1m but usually less. Branches erect or ascending, internodes (0.7-)0.9-1.6 mm, branchlets including leaves 1.5-2(-3) mm wide, leaf bases hairy, fused together, nodal joint distinct or obscure, usually exposed. Leaves persistent on old branchlets. Leaves fused, appressed (when fresh) spreading when drying. Leaf not thickened near apex, apex obtuse, apiculate or subapiculate, margin ciliate, lower surface yellowish-green, veins not evident. Inflorescences terminal, unbranched, with (2-)8(-10) flowers. Flowers sessile, calyx 1.5-2 mm, 3-lobed, lobes ovate or oblong, obtuse or emarginate. Corolla tube hairy inside, 1-1.7 x 1.3-1.6 mm, equal to or shorter than calyx, lobes ovate or elliptic to broadly oblong, obtuse, suberect to patent, longer than corolla tube, white or mauve, if mauve fading to white with age. Stamen filaments 2-3 mm, anthers yellow or tinged pink 1.4-1.6 mm. Ovary globose, 0.8-1 mm. Capsules obtuse 2.3 x 1.6 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Closely allied to *Veronica annulata* and *V. salicornioides*, and has been confused with *V. ochracea*. It occurs in the wild with none of these species. It is most likely to be confused with *Veronica annulata* from which it differs by the more slender branchlets, slightly mucronate (leaves with a fine, sharp leaf extension), and by the foliage being less tightly overlapping and not so appressed to the stem. Other key differences between *Veronica armstrongii* and *V. annulata* are that *V. annulata* is diploid ( $2n = 42$ ) and *V. armstrongii* tetraploid ( $2n = 84$ ) and both species are ecologically separated (see also *V. annulata*).

## FLOWERING

October - January

## FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White

## FRUITING

December to November

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and semi hardwood cuttings. Dislikes humidity. It has been observed that cultivated plants, particularly those grown in the North Island rarely flower. It would seem that a cold winter and very hot, dry summer is the stimulus needed to ensure good flowering.

## THREATS

Seriously threatened through loss of habitat. This species seems to require permanently damp or boggy ground, and usually grows amongst bog pine (*Halocarpus bidwillii*) adjacent tarns or on swampy alluvial flats. Of the two populations known, one has declined despite intensive management probably because the habitat has dried out, and is now persisting only due to regular

## ETYMOLOGY

**veronica:** Named after Saint Veronica, who gave Jesus her veil to wipe his brow as he carried the cross through Jerusalem, perhaps because the common name of this plant is 'speedwell'. The name Veronica is often believed to derive from the Latin vera 'truth' and iconica 'image', but it is actually derived from the Macedonian name Berenice which means 'bearer of victory'.

**armstrongii:** Named either after Joseph Francis Armstrong (1820-1902) or his son John Beattie Armstrong (1850-1926).

## WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold in garden centres. This species was quite commonly cultivated in the 1970s but since then it has been virtually replaced by *Veronica (Hebe) ochracea*, which is often sold as *Hebe armstrongii* or *H. armstrongii* 'James Stirling'. Some garden centres have now correctly relabelled their stock of that cultivar as *H. ochracea* 'James Stirling'. In the North Island *Veronica armstrongii* will not flower unless it has experienced a very cold winter.

## NOTES ON ETYMOLOGY

Named after Joseph Francis Armstrong, who collected the type specimen.

### **ATTRIBUTION**

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 October 2006. Description based on Bayly & Kellow (2006).

### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING**

Bayly, M.J.; Kellow, A.V. *Hebes*, identification, classification and biology. Wellington, Te Papa Press

### **CITATION**

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

### **MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-armstrongii/>