Veronica barkeri

COMMON NAME
Barker’s koromiko, Chatham Island tree hebe

SYNONYMS
Hebe barkeri (Cockayne) Cockayne, Hebe gigantea (Cockayne) Cockayne (Veronica gigantea Cockayne) might also belong here but the type material is inadequate to allow confident identification.

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica barkeri Cockayne

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
HEBBAR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 40

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, IE, RF

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, IE
2004 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Bushy small tree bearing narrow pairs of leaves with a finely hairy margin (lens needed) inhabiting the Chatham Islands. Leaves taper towards tip, to 79mm long by 22mm wide. Leaf bud without gap. Flowers whiteish, in a spike to 8cm long.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic to the Chatham Islands. Found on Chatham, South East and Pitt Islands.

HABITAT
Forest and scrub, especially on coastal scarps, forested streamsides and the banks of incised streams. Often epiphytic on tree fern trunks.
FEATURES
Tree up to 13 m tall producing a dense, rounded to conical, canopy when mature. Branches erect, old stems brown, branchlets green, red-brown or purple, pubescent, hairs uniform; internodes 3–30 mm. Leaf bud pubescent (rarely glabrous) sinus absent. Leaves erecto-patent to patent; lamina 24–90 × 4–30 mm, linear-lanceolate or lanceolate, subcoriaceous, flat to weakly concave, apex acute; margin narrowly cartilaginous, minutely pubescent (hairs eglandular), upper surface yellow-green to light green, midrib distinctly hairy, hairs glandular or rarely eglandular, lower surface paler than upper, conspicuously (or faintly) pitted, each pit containing a single twin-headed glandular hair, midrib hairy, sometimes the rest of the underside also uniformly eglandular pubescent or glabrous. Inflorescence racemose, lateral and unbranched, 20–50-flowered, 28–80 mm long, mostly equal to subtending leaves rarely shorter or longer; peduncle 6–15 mm; rachis 22–68 mm. Bracts alternate, deltoid, oblong, obtuse to acute. Flowers hermaphrodite or gynodioecious. Pedicels 1.0–6.0 mm long, always longer than bracts. Calyx 1.5–4.2 mm long; lobes deltoid, lanceolate to broadly lanceolate, acute to obtuse, externally hairy. Corolla tube 1.4–2.0 × 1.6–1.9 mm, broadly funnelform, shorter than calyx; lobes longer than corolla tube, white tinged with pale blue or mauve, or distally or completely dark blue or pink at anthesis, white or pale blue with age, elliptic, lanceolate, rhomboid or ovate, obtuse, cucullate, suberect to recurved. Stamen filaments 4–5 mm long, white, mauve or blue, straight or incurved at apex in bud; anthers 1.5–2.0 mm long, purple. Ovary 1.1–1.3 mm long, ovoid, hairy; style 2.5–4.5 mm long, hairy. Capsules 4.0–5.0 × 2.8–3.3 mm, hairy, loculicidal split extending ¼–¾-way to base. Seeds 1.1–2.0 × 1.0–1.4 mm, strongly flattened, ellipsoid-oblong to broadly ellipsoid, winged, pale to dark brown.

SIMILAR TAXA
Could be confused with the Chatham Island endemic Veronica dieffenbachii from which it can be distinguished by the tree habit and upright branches. The leaf buds, mid rib and margin are minutely puberulent. The mature leaves are also broadest at their midpoint. The corolla tube also differs from V. dieffenbachii in that it does not exceed the calyx, and is shorter than the corolla lobes.

FLOWERING
December - March

FLOWER COLOURS
Lavender, White

FRUITING
January - April

LIFE CYCLE
Seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed. Can be hard to strike from cuttings and difficult to maintain in humid climates.

THREATS
Extinct in the northern two thirds of the main Chatham Island (though it has been planted at several reserve within that area). Browsing animals (especially cattle, sheep, possums and pigs) pose the greatest threat. Fire and clearance for farming are other threats. Young plants on the ground are highly vulnerable to being browsed. Stem borers can limit fruit production in some seasons. There is some evidence to suggest that isolated trees set lower levels of viable seed. This needs further research.

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’.
barkeri: Named in honour of Samuel D. Barker (1948-1901)

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description based on Bayly & Kellow (2006) but see also de Lange et (2010)
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.
Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11: 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
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New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-barkeri/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION