

Veronica benthamii

COMMON NAME

Bentham's hebe

SYNONYMS

Hebe benthamii (Hook.f.) Cockayne et Allan, *Leonohebe benthamii* (Hook.f.) Heads

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica benthamii Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Low-growing bright green bushy fleshy shrub bearing pairs of oval leaves and small purple flowers. Leaves with a furry silvery margin, slightly notched. Flowers in a leafy spike to 10 cm long.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Usually on peat amongst *Chionochloa antarctica* tussocks and shield fern (*Polystichum vestitum*). Sometimes grows around boulder and rock outcrops.



Campbell Island. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Bushy or spreading shrub up to 1 × 1 m. branches decumbent or ascending; branchlets pubescent or glabrous, if hairy then hairs white, bifarious or occasionally uniform; internodes 1.0–13.0–15.6 mm; leaves abscising at nodes. **Leaf bud** obscured by surrounding leaves, leaves usually overtopping bud. **Leaves** connate, erecto-patent to reflexed; lamina elliptic or obovate, coriaceous, flat, 10.0–33.0 × 3.5–14.5 mm; apex obtuse or truncate; midrib thickened below and depressed above; margin conspicuously puberulent, shallowly to deeply toothed; upper surface green, glabrous to hairy along midrib or hairy toward base. **Inflorescences** 11–30-flowered, mostly terminal, unbranched or with 3 or more branches (up to 4 lateral branches but never compound branching); peduncle 8–19 mm; rachis 16–93 mm. **Bracts** opposite and decussate, mostly free rarely connate, usually obovate sometimes elliptic, apex surmounted with a prominent gland, obtuse or subacute, occasionally emarginate. **Flowers** blue on pedicels 1–4 mm long, these hairy or glabrous. **Calyx** 3.0–8.5 mm, 4–6-lobed; lobes oblong or obovate, obtuse or subacute with a prominent apical gland, eglandular ciliate (hairs white, long and tangled), glabrous externally, hairy inside. **Corolla tube** 2.0–3.2 × 3.5–3.9 mm, cylindrical, somewhat dorso-ventrally compressed, glabrous, < calyx; lobes 4–6, sky-blue or violet at anthesis, darkening to blue with age, obovate to circular, obtuse (posterior occasionally emarginate), erect to patent, > corolla tube; corolla throat blue or white. **Stamen filaments** blue, erect, 1.0–1.5 mm; anthers blue, 1.2–1.6 mm. **Ovary** 1.8–2.3 mm, 2–3-locular; style 2.1–3.2 mm. **Capsules** latiseptate (2-locular) or turgid (3-locular), subacute, 4.5–6.0 mm, hairy, septicial splits sometimes extending only $\frac{3}{4}$ -way to base, loculicidal split extending $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ -way to base (usually < $\frac{1}{2}$ -way). **Seeds** 1.2–1.9 × 1.3–1.6 mm, straw-yellow or dark brown, strongly flattened, broad ellipsoid to discoid, winged.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all other New Zealand *Veronica* species by the leaves which are densely fringed by white hairs, often toothed; by the terminal inflorescence leaf-like bracts, blue flowers bearing 4–6 calyx and corolla lobes, and 2–3-locular ovaries and fruits.

FLOWERING

October–May

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

FRUITING

November–October

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild

THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, Range-Restricted endemic abundant within its known habitats which are part of Nature Reserves and World Heritage Sites whose access requires permits issued by the New Zealand Department of Conservation. There are no known threats to this species.

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'.

benthamii: Named in honour of George Bentham (1800 - 1884), considered the most prolific botanist of the nineteenth century.

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange (15 August 2005): Description modified from Bayly and Kellow (2006)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Bayly MJ, Kellow AV. 2006. An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Te Papa Press, Wellington, NZ. 388 p.
Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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