

# Veronica biggarii

## COMMON NAME

Biggar's hebe

## SYNONYMS

*Hebe biggarii* (Cockayne) Cockayne

## FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Veronica biggarii* Cockayne

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

HEBBIG

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small bushy fleshy shrub bearing pairs of oval, red-margined leaves and flower spikes on a noticeable stalk at the tips of erect branches and inhabiting northern Southland mountains. Young flower spikes a distinctive bright pink. Leaves 7-15mm long by 4-8mm wide. Leaf bud without gap at base.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Southland, Eyre and Thomson mountains and Mid Dome)

## HABITAT

Alpine. On rock outcrops, cliffs and bluffs also in open snow tussock (*Chionochloa* Zotov) grassland



Hebe biggarii. Photographer: John Barkla



Kingston. Photographer: John Barkla

## FEATURES

Small, erect to sparingly branched spreading, bushy shrub to 0.5 m tall. Branches spreading, decumbent, ascending or erect, old stems grey; branchlets green, brown, red-brown or purplish, puberulent, pubescent or glabrous, hairs bifarious; internodes 3-12 mm. Leaf bud distinct; sinus absent. Leaves erecto-patent to patent; lamina narrowly to broadly elliptic, coriaceous, concave or flat, 5-20 × 2-10 mm; apex acute to rounded; midrib not thickened, rarely evident in fresh leaves; margin glabrous, often tinged red; upper surface glaucous, glabrous; lower surface glaucous. Inflorescences with 8-25 flowers, lateral, unbranched, 20-50 mm long; peduncle 5-18 mm; rachis 15-25 mm. Bracts alternate, linear to narrowly deltoid, subacute to acute. Flowers hermaphrodite. Pedicels < or = to bracts, 1-3 mm long. Calyx 1.8-3.0 mm, 4-5-lobed; lobes lanceolate, subacute or acute, with mixed glandular/eglandular cilia. Corolla tube glabrous, 1.5-1.8 × 2.0-2.5 mm, contracted at base, = or > calyx; lobes white or tinged pink, elliptic, obtuse or subacute, erect to recurved, > corolla tube. Stamen filaments slightly diverging with age, 3-4 mm, anthers magenta, 1.6-1.8 mm. Ovary 1.4-1.8 mm; style 3.5-5.0 mm. Capsules usually pinkish-red when immature, acute, 3.5-4.0 × 2.0-3.0 mm, loculicidal split extending ¼-⅓ way to base. Seeds strongly to weakly flattened, ellipsoid, oblong-ellipsoid to irregular, straw-yellow to pale brown, 0.8-1.3 × 0.6-0.8 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Differs from *Veronica buchananii* and *V. pinguifolia* by its erect growth habit, distinctly pedicellate (at least the lower most) flowers, mostly glabrous ovaries and capsules; and by the acute apices of the developing capsules. The dark red-pigmentation of the infructescences of *Veronica biggarii* is especially distinctive though it can vary within populations.

## FLOWERING

October – June

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

## FRUITING

November – May

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from cuttings and fresh seed. An attractive species which has been used quite successfully in breeding new hebe cultivars.

## THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, range-restricted endemic locally common within its key habitats and under no obvious threats.

## 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'.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by Peter J. de Lange (3 August 2006). Description modified from Bayley and Kellow (2006)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Bayly, M.; Kellow, A. 2006: An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Te Papa Press, Wellington.  
Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285-309

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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**MORE INFORMATION**

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