

# Veronica birleyi

## COMMON NAMES

Birley's veronica

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Subshrub, 20–200 mm tall. Old stems brown to grey. Branches decumbent. Branchlets brown or purplish. Vegetative internodes 2–8 mm long. Stem pubescence uniform, eglandular pubescent (rarely a few glandular hairs also present). Leaves decussate, erecto-patent to spreading. Lamina obovate, 4.0–12.0 × 2.5–11.0 mm. Upper surface of leaves greyish dark green or purple, dull. Under surface of leaves dark green or purple, dull. Leaf hairs dense, on all parts of leaf. Apex obtuse or rounded or retuse or truncate. Base cuneate. Margin ciliate and glandular-ciliate (very few glandular hairs), crenate (deeply). Marginal teeth or lobes in 1–3 pairs. Petiole 0–1 mm long. Inflorescence a solitary flower or a pair of flowers (rarely 3), 0.2–0.6 cm long at fruiting. Indumentum of peduncle, rachis, and pedicels sparse to moderately dense. Eglandular hairs of inflorescence patent, white. Peduncle 2–40 mm long, eglandular-pubescent; hairs all around peduncle. Bracts paired and opposite, obtuse, eglandular-hairy adaxially and eglandular-hairy abaxially (usually with some glandular hairs), spatulate (narrowly). Bract margins entire. Pedicels erecto-patent at anthesis, straight at fruiting, 0.3–1.0 mm long, glabrous or eglandular-pubescent; hairs all around pedicel. Flowers: Calyx 4-lobed, 4–6 mm long. Calyx lobes oblong or elliptic, subacute or obtuse. Calyx hairs on both abaxial and adaxial surfaces, mixed eglandular and glandular. Calyx lobe margins entire. Corolla white at anthesis. Nectar guides absent. Corolla 7–10 mm diameter. Corolla tube 2–3 × 1 mm wide, glabrous. Corolla lobes glabrous. Posterior corolla lobe circular to elliptic, emarginate or divided in two, 3.0–4.0 × 1.8–3.0 mm. Lateral corolla lobes elliptic, obtuse, flat, not enfolding stamens, 4–5 × 4–4.5 mm. Anterior corolla lobe elliptic, obtuse, 4.0–4.5 × 2.5–3.0 mm. Stamen filaments white, 2–3 mm long, not narrowed at base. Anthers pink or magenta or mauve, 1.0–1.5 mm long. Nectarial disc glabrous. Ovary ovoid, acute, glabrous, 1.0–1.5 mm long. Style 1.0–1.5 mm long. Stigma 0.3–0.4 mm wide. Capsules narrowly angustiseptate, emarginate, 3–4 × 3–4 mm, 0.8–1.0 mm thick, glabrous. Septicidal split of capsule extending ¼ way to base. Loculicidal split of capsule extending ½ way to base. Seeds c.10–15 per locule, strongly flattened, smooth-surfaced, ellipsoid, straw yellow to pale brown, 0.8–1.0 × 0.6–0.7 mm.



Jamieson saddle, Mt Cook, February.  
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Hector Mountains. Photographer: John Barkla,  
Licence: CC BY.

### **SIMILAR TAXA**

Plants of this species are very similar to *Veronica spectabilis* which is endemic to the Takitimu Mountains (outside the range of *V. birleyi*) and which has larger flowers, fewer leaf lobes, more glandular hairs, hairy capsules, and occurs at lower elevations.

### **DISTRIBUTION**

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Main Divide from Mt Westland to northern Fiordland; also the Remarkables, Eyre and Hector Mountains)

### **HABITAT**

High alpine (up to 2900 m a.s.l.). Colonising rock shelves, ledges and crevices.

### **GENUS**

*Veronica*

### **FAMILY**

Plantaginaceae

### **AUTHORITY**

*Veronica birleyi* N.E.Br.

### **SYNONYMS**

*Parahebe birleyi* (N.E.Br.) W.R.B.Oliv. *Parahebe linifolia* subsp. *brevistylis* Garn.-Jones, *Veronica colostylis* Garn.-Jones, *Hebejeebie birleyi* (N.E.Br.) Heads

### **ENDEMIC TAXON**

Yes

### **ENDEMIC GENUS**

No

### **ENDEMIC FAMILY**

No

### **FLOWERING**

November - December

### **FRUITING**

December - March

### **PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE**

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild.

### **WHERE TO BUY**

Not Commercially Available

### **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'.

### **NVS CODE**

VERBIR

### **CHROMOSOME NUMBER**

2n = 42

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NS, NStr, RR, Sp, TL Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Garnock-Jones, P.J.; Lloyd, D.G. 2003: A taxonomic revision of *Parahebe* (Plantaginaceae) in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42: 181-232.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange (5 October 2006). Description adapted from Garnock-Jones and Lloyd (2003).

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

08 June 2026