Veronica brachysiphon

COMMON NAMES
hebe

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Bushy rounded green shrub bearing pairs of oval pointed leaves with small white dots on the surface (lens needed) inhabiting Marlborough and Canterbury mountains. Leaves 8.5-25.5mm long by 3.3-8mm wide. Flower bud with small pointed gap between leaves at base. Flowers white, in short spikes to 4.1cm long.

Swale stream. Photographer: Simon Moore, Licence: CC BY-SA.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Bushy shrub (often closely branched with a compact habit, but sometimes more open) to 1.8 m tall. Branches erect, old stems brown or grey; branchlets green (quickly becoming brown with age), puberulent, hairs bifarious (usually) or uniform; internodes 2-7 (-10.5) mm; leaf decurrencies evident. Leaf bud distinct; sinus narrow and acute, small and acute, or small and rounded (rarely). Leaves decussate to subdistichous, erecto-patent to patent; lamina elliptic (sometimes narrowly) or oblanceolate or ovate or obovate or oblong, rigid or subcoriaceous, concave, (5.5-) 8.5-25.5 x 3.3-8 (-10) mm; apex acute or subacute to occasionally obtuse; 2 lateral secondary veins sometimes evident at base of fresh leaves; midrib thickened below and slightly depressed to grooved above; margin ciliolate or ciliate (with eglandular and/or glandular hairs; occasionally glabrous on older leaves); upper surface light to dark green, glossy or dull, with many stomata, hairy along midrib; lower surface lighter green than upper surface; petiole (0.5-)0.8-3(-3.5) mm, hairy along margins and sometimes hairy above. Inflorescences with (9-) 14-36 flowers, lateral, unbranched (usually) or tripartite, (1.2-)1.7-4.1 cm; peduncle 0.5-1.3cm; rachis 0.6-3.1 cm. Bracts lowermost pair opposite, then subopposite or alternate above (usually) or alternate, ovate to lanceolate or deltoid (lowermost), obtuse or subacute (usually) or acute (lowermost), Flowers, hermaphrodite or female (on different plants). Pedicels 0.6-2.5(-3) mm, hairy or sometimes almost glabrous. Calyx 1.7-3 mm, 4-5-lobed (5th lobe small, posterior); lobes elliptic or ovate, subacute or obtuse or occasionally emarginate. Corolla tube hairy inside; tube of hermaphrodite flowers 2.2-3.5(-4) x 1.7-2.2 mm, cylindric to funnelform, longer than (usually) or equalling calyx; tube of female flowers 1.6-3 x 1.4-1.8 mm, funnelform, equalling or longer than calyx; lobes white at anthesis (but sometimes pale mauve in bud), elliptic to oblong or circular or ovate or obovate (occasionally), obtuse, patent, longer than (usually) to shorter than corolla tube. Stamen filaments 1-4.5 mm (1-1.3 mm on female flowers, 3-4.5 mm on hermaphrodite flowers); anthers mauve or purple, 2.2-2.3 mm; sterile anthers 1-1.3 mm. Ovary sometimes hairy, 0.9-1.2 mm; ovules 8-13 per locule; style 4.2-7.2 mm. Capsules subacute, 3-6 x 2.3-4.5 mm, sometimes hairy, loculicidal split extending ¼-½-way to base. Seed characters not recorded.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from most species by the combination of a bushy, often rounded habit; usually acute leaf bud sinuses; non-glaucous leaves; pedicellate flowers; small bracts; and corolla tubes usually longer than surrounding calyces. Veronica brachysiphon is probably most closely related to Veronica venustula, in which it was included by Druce (1980), Smith-Dodsworth (1991) and Wilson & Galloway (1993). The two are morphologically similar and share the same hexaploidy chromosome number. They are retained as distinct species because differences in flavonoid chemistry, together with their geographic separation (North Island/South Island), suggest genetic differentiation and reproductive isolation. Plants of V. brachysiphon often have more conspicuous stomata on the upper leaf surface than H. venustula and a relatively broader petiole, but these differences are not consistent; reliable characters that morphologically distinguish specimens of the two species are unknown.

DISTRIBUTION
South Island - Mountains of Marlborough and Canterbury, from the Red Hills Ridge to near Mount Hutt.

HABITAT
Subalpine shrubland and in beech forest close to the tree-line.

GENUS
Veronica

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica brachysiphon (Summerh.) Bean

SYNONYMS
Hebe brachysiphon Summerh.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
The morphological and distributional limits of *Veronica brachysiphon* and *Veronica subfulvida* also require clarification. In general, *Veronica brachysiphon* is a rounded shrub of subalpine areas and has simple, or predominantly simple, inflorescences, whereas *Veronica subfulvida* a plant of variable, though usually more open, habit that occurs chiefly in montane lo lowland areas, and has inflorescences that are mostly branched. *Veronica brachysiphon* often also has leaves that are comparatively broader (relative to their length) and less acute al their apices. However, despite this, and the fact that a study of chromosome numbers (de Lange et al. 2004) suggests consistent differences between the species, some specimens are difficult to identify with certainty. These specimens are either vegetative (i.e. they do not provide inflorescence characters for comparison) or have a mixture of branched and simple inflorescences. These unmapped specimens are mostly from eastern Marlborough, or from the area between Hanmer Springs and Nelson Lakes. It is likely that one or both species are more widespread in these areas than the distribution maps suggest.
Specimens have sometimes been misidentified as *Veronica odora* and vice versa.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October-) December - February (-March)

FRUITING
January – May (December)

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

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'.
brachysiphon: Greek, means short-tubed (brachy- = short, little; siphon = reed, straw, tube)

NVS CODE

VERBRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 120

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Bayly, M.J., Kellow, A.V. 2006 An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa press pg. 256.
de Lange, P. J., Murray, B. G. and Datson, P. M. 2004 Contributions to a chromosome atlas of the New Zealand flora- 38. Counts for 50 families. New Zealand Journal of Botany *42:* 873-904.
Druce, A. P. 1980 Trees, shrubs, and lianes of New Zealand (including wild hybrids). Unpublished checklist held at Landcare Research, Lincoln, New Zealand. (Copy also held in the library of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.)
Smith-Dodsworth, J. C. 1991 *New Zealand Native Shrubs and Climbers.* Auckland: David Bateman.
Wilson, H. D. and Galloway, T. 1993 Small-leaved Shrubs of New Zealand.Christchurch: Manuka Press.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted by M. Ward from Bayly & Kellow (2006).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-brachysiphon/

PDF DATE

07 June 2026