

Veronica chathamica

COMMON NAMES

Chatham Island koromiko

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Very low growing sprawling shrub bearing pairs of oval leaves and rounded flower spikes on a distinct stalk inhabiting coastal sites of the Chatham Islands. Leaves 8.5–33mm long by 5.5–16mm wide. Leaf bud without gap at base. Flowers often tinged purple, in a rounded spike to 4cm long.

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Spreading low shrub often form mats up to 1 m across and 0.25 m tall. Branches prostrate, decumbent or pendent, rooting freely from nodes, old stems brown or grey; branchlets green or red-brown, pubescent; internodes 1.9–25.5 mm. Leaf bud distinct; sinus mostly absent, if present, small and rounded. Leaves erecto-patent to recurved; lamina elliptic, obovate or oblanceolate, coriaceous, flat, 8.5–33.0 × 3.3–16.5 mm; apex subacute to obtuse; margin narrowly cartilaginous, usually glabrous, sometimes pubescent, often red-tinged; upper surface green to dark green, dull, glabrous, occasionally minutely hairy along midrib, lower surface light green, glabrous, rarely hairy along midrib. Inflorescences with 20–40 flowers, lateral, unbranched, 13–41 mm; peduncle 5–20 mm, rachis 2–18 mm. Bracts alternate often with lowermost pair opposite, then subopposite or alternate above, lanceolate to linear-lanceolate, acute, margins glabrous, occasionally hairy, usually hairy outside. Flowers hermaphrodite. Pedicels 1.0–2.6 mm. Calyx 2.5–4.0 mm; lobes linear-lanceolate or deltoid, acute, ciliate, usually hairy outside. Corolla tube hairy inside and occasionally outside, 2.5–4.0 × 2.0–2.3 mm, cylindric, usually = or > calyx (rarely < calyx); lobes white, tinged purplish mauve, completely dark purple-mauve, elliptic or ovate, obtuse, patent, shorter than corolla tube, hairy inside, sometimes scarcely, and then only on the base of the inner surface. Stamen filaments 4.0–4.5 mm long; anthers pale brown or pale mauve, 2.0–2.4 mm. Nectarial disc ciliate or glabrous. Ovary sometimes hairy, 1.2–1.5 mm; style 5–6 mm, glabrous or sometimes hairy. Capsules subacute, 3.5–5.0 × 2.5–3.5 mm, glabrous or occasionally minutely hairy, loculicidal split extending to ¼ way to base. Seeds flattened, broad ellipsoid to sub-discoid, brown, 1.2–1.6 × 0.9–1.3 mm.



Kaingaroa, Chatham Islands. Photographer: John Sawyer, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Hebe chathamica, Te Wakura Island, Chatham Island. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Related to *Veronica dieffenbachii* with which it readily forms hybrids. From that species it is distinguished by the prostrate, creeping growth habit, smaller leaves which are wider than long, and much smaller inflorescences. *Veronica dieffenbachii* is usually found in less exposed sites in coastal scrub, on the margins of forest, or on limestone outcrops

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Chatham Islands (Chatham, Pitt, Mangere, Little Mangere, South-East, Star Keys, Sisters, Forty Fours, and Rabbit Islands –also many near shore rock stacks)

HABITAT

Mostly coastal though can occasionally be found growing well inland on exposed rock outcrops, and common along the shores of Te Whanga. Usually in salt meadow, on cliff tops, on rock stacks, on cobble beaches, more rarely in coastal forest around petrel burrows.

THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, range-restricted island endemic. Of the three Chatham Island endemic hebes, this species is the most common and least threatened. However, in disturbed sites it commonly forms hybrid swarms with *Veronica dieffenbachii*, and in some sites such as Kaiangaroa hybrids are more common than either parent.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica chathamica Buchanan

SYNONYMS

Veronica coxiana Kirk, *Veronica chathamica* var. *coxiana* (Kirk) Cheeseman, *Hebe coxiana* (Kirk) Cockayne, *Hebe chathamica* (Buchanan) Cockayne et Allan

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

December – July

FRUITING

January – December

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from cuttings, rooted pieces and seed. A very attractive *Hebe* species which is excellent in a rock garden, pot or hanging basket, and great in a coastal garden. Sadly flowering is often erratic in warmer more humid climates.

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'.

chathamica: From the Chatham Islands

NVS CODE

VERCHA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

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

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by Peter J. de Lange (18 August 2006): Description modified from Bayly and Kellow (2006)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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