Veronica cupressoides

COMMON NAME
Cypress hebe

SYNONYMS
Hebe cupressoides (Hook.f.) Andersen, Hebe cupressoides (Hook.f.) Cockayne et Allan nom. illeg., Leonohebe cupressoides (Hook.f.) Heads

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica cupressoides Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
LEOCUP

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 42

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RF

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RF
2004 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Rare bushy shrub bearing masses of thin green slightly knobbly leafless twigs that have clusters of pinkish flowers at tips. Leaves scale like, 1-2mm long, triangular, spaced along and clasping the stem. Flowers with long projecting filaments. Fruit a dry rounded capsule.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Eastern South Island, occurring historically recorded from 35 sites extending from Marlborough south to Otago.

HABITAT
Veronica cupressoides is a plant of grey scrub communities and occurs across a range of sites from those that have been recently influenced by disturbance (especially river flooding and slips) to more stable sites such as rock outcrops and bouldery moraine.
FEATURES
Aromatic bushy shrub up to 3 × 2 m. Branches erect, whip-like; branches green, grey-green, glaucous; internodes 1.5–6.5 mm; branchlets, including leaves 1.0–3.7 mm wide; leaf bases connate, hairy or glabrous; nodal joint distinct, exposed; leaves not readily abscising, persistent. Leaves connate, appressed; lamina 0.8–2.0 × 0.4–2.0 mm; deltoid, apex acute to obtuse; margin ciliolate or glandular-ciliolate, lower surface glaucous or glaucescent or yellowish-green, glabrous or covered in minute glandular hairs. Juvenile leaves pinnatifid, glabrous or puberulent. Inflorescences 2–22-flowered, terminal, unbranched, 3–40 mm long, rachis 2–33 mm long, glabrous or hairy. Bracts opposite and decussate, shortly connate or free, ovate or deltoid, obtuse or subacute, externally hairy, hairs glandular. Flowers hermaphrodite, mostly sessile. Calyx 1.3–2.0 mm long, 2–4-lobed; lobes acuminate or emarginate, glandular ciliolate, especially externally. Corolla tube 0.9–1.4 × 0.8–1.1 mm, internally hairy; lobes longer than corolla tube, inner surface papillate, cream, white, pale blue, pink or mauve at anthesis, white, cream, pink or mauve with age, obtuse, suberect to recurved, corolla throat pink, mauve or white. Stamen filaments 2.1–3.0 mm long, coloured cream, pink or mauve when young, fading white; anthers 0.9–1.2 mm, reddish-pink to purplish-mauve. Ovary 0.8–1.1 mm long, ovoid or globose, apex didymous. Capsules 1.9–2.4 × 0.9–1.4 mm, angustiseptate, grooved along septum, emarginate, septicidal split extending ⅓-way to base, loculicidal split extending up to ½-way to base. Seeds 0.7–1.1 × 0.4–0.6 mm, weakly flattened, ovoid to ellipsoid-oblong or obovoid, pale brown.

SIMILAR TAXA
Veronica cupressoides is superficially similar to V. propinqua from which it differs by its finer branches, blue-green branchlets and wide spaces between scale leaves. Furthermore the foliage of V. cupressoides is very aromatic smelling strongly of turpentine. In contrast Veronica propinqua has white flowers, non aromatic foliage, green branchlets, with a shorter gap between the pairs of scale leaves.

FLOWERING
November - February

FLOWER COLOURS
Blue, Violet/Purple

FRUITING
March - May

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings and fresh seed. In cultivation flowering plants often produce numerous spontaneous seedlings. Rarely flowers in lowland, warmer or more humid climates.

THREATS
Habitat loss has been a key factor in the historical decline of Leonohebe cupressoides. The dominant threats now are recruitment failure caused by invasive herbaceous plants that rapidly occupy the disturbed sites this species requires to germinate in. Grazing animals, including domestic stock and wild species such as rabbits and hares can seriously damage or kill plants. Small populations are vulnerable to local extinction through disturbance such as river flooding, and fire – particularly as this species is extremely flammable wet or dry.

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’.

WHERE TO BUY
Occasionally available from plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description based on Bayly & Kellow (2006) but see also de Lange et (2010)
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

MORE INFORMATION