

# Veronica cupressoides

## COMMON NAMES

cypress hebe

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CR, PF, RF

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED 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.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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  $\frac{1}{3}$ -way to base, loculicidal split extending up to  $\frac{1}{3}$ -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.



Leonobohe cupressoides in flower.  
Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 01/01/2003, Licence: CC BY.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe,  
Date taken: 16/02/2009, Licence: CC BY.

## 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.

## 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.

## GENUS

*Veronica*

## FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Veronica cupressoides* Hook.f.

## SYNONYMS

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

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

November - February

## FRUITING

March - May

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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.

## CULTIVATION

Occasionally available from plant nurseries.

## 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

VERCUP

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP, RF

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RF

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RF

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: NR, NStr, PF, RF 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

Bayly M.; Kellow A. 2006: An Illustrated Guide to New Zealand Hebes. Te Papa Press: Wellington  
de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.

[Norton, D.A. 2000. Hebe cupressoides recovery plan, 2000-2010. Threatened Species Recovery Plan 33. Department of Conservation](#)

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 Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description based on Bayly & Kellow (2006) but see also de Lange et (2010)

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-cupressoides/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026