

Veronica decumbens

COMMON NAMES

hebe

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low growing erect twigs bearing pairs of oval dished leaves with a red band on the outer edge and tiny hairs on the margin towards the tip (lens needed) inhabiting Marlborough mountains. Twigs dark red, with bands of hairs. Leaves 6.5-23.5mm long by 2-13mm wide. Flower spike to 3cm long.

FLOWER COLOURS

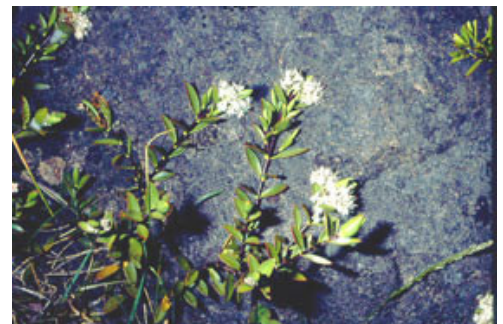
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Openly branched, spreading low shrub to 0.35 m tall. Branches decumbent to erect; branchlets purplish-red to almost black, pubescent, hairs bifarious (usually) or uniform; internodes 1.5-16.5 mm; leaf decurrencies obscure to evident. Leaf bud distinct; sinus absent. Leaves erecto-patent; lamina elliptic (often broadly) or obovate or oblanceolate, concave, 6.5-23.5 x 2-13 mm; apex subacute or acute; midrib not thickened or depressed to grooved above and thickened below, only sometimes faintly evident in fresh leaves; margin ciliate (with very short, stiff hairs) or glabrous (only very rarely, with hairs usually present at least near apices of youngest leaves), almost always tinged red; upper surface dark green, glossy, with many stomata, glabrous. Inflorescences with 2-25 flowers, lateral, unbranched, 0.6-3 cm, longer than (usually) to shorter than (rarely) subtending leaves; peduncle 0.15-1.6 cm; rachis 0.4-2.4 cm. Bracts alternate (although lower-most bracts may be in a more or less opposite pair, or whorl of three), deltoid (sometimes narrowly) or ovate, acute (usually) to obtuse, glabrous outside. Flowers hermaphrodite. Pedicels 0.2-1.7 mm, hairy or sometimes glabrous. Calyx 1-3 mm, 4-5-lobed (5th lobe small, posterior); lobes deltoid or ovate, acute or acuminate or obtuse, with mixed glandular and eglandular cilia (glandular cilia sometimes greatly outnumbering eglandular cilia). Corolla tube glabrous, 3-6 x 1.8-2 mm, cylindrical and contracted at base, much longer than calyx; lobes white at anthesis, elliptic (sometimes broadly) or ovate, obtuse (usually) to acute (posterior sometimes slightly emarginate), suberect to patent, shorter than corolla tube. Stamen filaments at least slightly incurved at apex in bud, 4.2-7 mm; anthers magenta, 1.6-2 mm. Ovary 0.9-1.1 mm; ovules 17-20 per locule; style 6-10 mm. Capsules subacute, 2.5-5.5 x 2-3.5 mm, loculicidal split extending ¼-½-way to base. Seeds flattened, ovoid to ellipsoid to oblong, more or less finely papillate, brown, (1-)1.2-1.7 x 0.8-1.3 mm, micropylar rim 0.3-0.7 mm.



Upper Clarence valley, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Upper Clarence valley, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive species recognised by the combination of a decumbent habit, dark branches that are often bifariously hairy in broad bands, glossy leaves, leaf margins that are usually red (except in plants from the Black Birch Ra.) and minutely ciliate, especially toward the apex, long corolla tubes, and bracts not extending beyond tips of calyces. It shows some variation in the shape of the leaves (from broadly to narrowly elliptic) and leaf apices (from barely subacute to acute). Herbarium specimens have frequently been misidentified as *V. pinguifolia* (with which it sometimes co-occurs). and vice versa. *V. pinguifolia* can be distinguished by its usually glaucous leaves, usually shorter pedicels, larger bracts, and relatively shorter corolla tubes.

DISTRIBUTION

South Island - Primarily on drier mountains of Marlborough, South-East Nelson and north Canterbury, from the Awatere Valley in the north to the Waiau Valley in the south, and as far west as the Matakaitaki Valley (near Mount Baldy).

HABITAT

In grassland or low shrubland in rocky, open areas.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica decumbens J.B.Armstr.

SYNONYMS

Hebe decumbens (J.B.Armstr.) Cockayne et Allan

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(November-) December - February

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'.

decumbens: From the Latin *decumbere* 'to lie down, recline', in botany refers to creeping plants with upright tips

NVS CODE

VERDCM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

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 MJ, Kellow AV. 2006. An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Te Papa Press, Wellington, NZ. 388 p.158.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

07 June 2026