Veronica diosmifolia

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 shrub bearing pairs of narrow leaves that have several notches in the margin inhabiting lowland areas north from Auckland. Leaves 8-20mm long by 3-6mm wide. Leaf with obvious narrow gap between leaves at base. Flower spike bushy, to 6cm long, usually with some branches.

FLOWER COLOURS
Blue, White

Hebe diosmifolia at Lake Rotokawau, Karikari Peninsula. Photographer: Bill Campbell, Date taken: 01/12/2007, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Close up of flowers, Ex Cult. Waipoua River. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 16/09/2006, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub (usually) or small tree (according to herbarium notes) to 2.5 (-6) m tall. Branches erect or spreading, old stems light brown to grey; branchlets green, puberulent, hairs usually uniform or sometimes tending bifarious; internodes (0.5-) 1-9 (-16) mm; leaf decurrencies evident. Leaf bud distinct; sinus narrow to broad, acute. Leaves subdistichous, patent; lamina narrowly oblong-elliptic or oblong or linear-lanceolate, rigid, flat or slightly concave, (3-) 8-20 (-30) x (2-) 3-6 mm; apex obtuse to acute or somewhat acuminate; margin ciliate (with eglandular and/or glandular hairs) and often minutely papillate, shallowly toothed (usually) or entire; upper surface green, dull, without evident stomata (usually) or with few stomata, hairy along midrib (usually) or glabrous (rarely); lower surface light green; petiole (0.3-) 1-4 mm, almost always hairy above and usually hairy along margins. Inflorescences with (4-) 10-54 flowers, lateral, with three or more branches (almost always) or unbranched (rarely, and never all inflorescences on a plant). (1-) 1.5-3.5 (-5.5) cm; peduncle (0.3-) 0.4-1.8 (-2.3) cm; rachis (0.4-) 1-2-3.1 cm. Bracts opposite and decussate or subopposite to alternate, ovate or lanceolate, subacute or acute. Flower, hermaphrodite. Pedicels longer than or equal to bracts, 1.5-4.2 mm. Calyx: 1.5-2.6 mm, 3-4 (-5)-lobed (5th lobe small, posterior), with anterior lobes free for most of their length or united between 1/3 and all the way to apex; lobes ovate to deltoid or elliptic, subacute to obtuse or emarginate (fused anterior lobes), usually with mixed glandular and eglandular cilia. Corolla tube glabrous, 2-2.5 x 1.5-2 mm, funnelform, longer than (usually) or equalling calyx; lobes pinkish-mauve or blue or white at anthesis, ovate to deltoid, subacute, patent, longer than corolla tube; corolla throat while or mauve. Stamen filaments 4.5-6 mm; anthers mauve or pink or buff, 1.2-1.7 mm. Ovary 0.8-1.1 mm; ovules approximately 9-11 per locule; style 4-8 mm. Capsules acute or subacute, 3.5-5.4 x (1.8-) 2.3-3.7 mm, loculicidal split extending 1/4-½-way to base. Seeds strongly flattened, broad ovoid or obovoid to discoid, not winged to only weakly winged, straw-yellow, 1.2-2 x 0.9-1.3 mm, micropylar rim 0.2-0.6 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive but variable species that is widely cultivated. It most closely resembles V. subfulvida, from which it is geographically separated and can be distinguished by having anterior calyx lobes that are partly or wholly fused (at least on some flowers on all specimens). The leaves are often minutely toothed and, when present, these teeth also distinguish specimens from V. subfulvida. Both of these features, together with the size and colour of the leaves, acute leaf bud sinus, and branched inflorescences. readily distinguish the species from all others of northern New Zealand.

DISTRIBUTION

North Island - Northern North Island, from Cape Reinga to Woodhill Forest.

HABITAT

Lowland scrub, and at forest margins, often in near-coastal situations or near riverbanks.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica diosmifolia A.Cunn.

SYNONYMS

Hebe diosmifolia (A.Cunn.) Cockayne et Allan, nom. superf., nom. illeg., Veronica menziesii Benth, Hebe menziesii (Benth) Cockayne et Allan, Veronica trisepala Colenso, Veronica diosmifolia var. trisepala (Colenso) Kirk, Hebe diosmifolia var. trisepala (Colenso) A.Wall, Hebe diosmifolia var. vernalis Carse, Hebe diosmifolia (A.Cunn.) Andersen

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Both diploid and tetraploid populations exist, and there is marked variation in flowering time, habit, shape and size of leaves, number and size of marginal incisions on leaves, the degree of inflorescence branching, pedicel length (affecting the general appearance of inflorescences) and the degree of fusion of anterior calyx lobes. Two segregate varieties have been proposed (Kirk 1896; Carse 1929), and some authors (e.g. Druce 1980; Eagle 1982) suggest the current circumscription potentially includes two distinct species. but the results of a detailed morphological and cytological study (Newman 1988; Murray el al. 1989) do not support any of these proposals. Plants from more northern localities tend to flower later (December-January) than those from southern localities (September-October), even in cultivation under uniform conditions. The known tetraploids are also all from northern populations. There are, however, populations with intermediate flowering times, some populations with anomalous flowering times (e.g. the southernmost population, at least sometimes, flowers in February), and there is geographic overlap in the distribution of chromosome races. Variation in other characters shows no consistent patterns, is not well correlated with flowering time or chromosome number and provides no clear grounds for the recognition of segregate taxa.

Colenso (1883) suggested that the species occurs in the Kaweka Range, Hawke's Bay, based on a collection attributed to Augustus Hamilton. This is an unlikely locality for the species, and it is not included on the distribution map (Bayly 2006), (also see comments by Moore, in Allan 1961).

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(August-) September-January (-July)

FRUITING

(September-) October-May (-August)

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'.

diosmifolia: Diosma-leaved

NVS CODE

VERDIO

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40, 80

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, RR, RF Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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ATTRIBUTION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026