Veronica elliptica

COMMON NAME
kokōmuka, shore hebe, shore koromiko

SYNONYMS
Veronica forsteri F.Muell. nom. illeg., Veronica decussata Moench,
Veronica decussata Aiton, Hebe magellanica J.F.Gmel., Veronica
marginata Colenso, Hebe elliptica (G.Forst.) Pennell, Hebe elliptica var.
crassifolia Cockayne et Allan

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica elliptica G.Forst.

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
HEBELL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 40

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Bushy shrub or small tree of coastal areas bearing pairs of dark green glossy leaves with a narrow white-hairy
margin. Leaves 12-31mm long by 6-12mm wide. Leaf with narrow gap between leaves at base. Flowers white or
purplish, in spike to 5cm long.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. North, South, Stewart, Snares, Auckland and Campbell Islands. In the North Island scarce, known only
from the west coast in scattered locations on the south Taranaki coast, on Kapiti Island, and Titahi Bay. Naturalised
on Chatham (Rekohu) Island. Indigenous also to the Falkland Islands. Also naturalised on Maatsuyker Island,
Tasmania

HABITAT
Grows in coastal areas, often in exposed places on rocks
FEATURES
Bushy shrub to 2 m tall. Branches erect, old stems brown; branchlets green or red-brown or reddish-black (initial cork formation often in regions between decurrencies), pubescent. hairs strictly bifarious or uniform; internodes (1-) 4-13 (-17.5) mm; leaf decurrencies evident (and often with a narrow ridge along medial line). Leaf bud distinct; sinus square to oblong. Leaves decussate or sometimes more or less subdistichous (with petioles twisted so that leaves face in more or less one direction), erecto-patent to patent; lamina broadly to narrowly elliptic or oblong or obovate or oblongoelliptical, coriaceous, flat or m-shaped in transverse section, (5-) 12-31 (-42) x (3-) 6-12 (-18) mm; apex plicate and mucronate or acute; base cuneate to truncate; margin sometimes cartilaginous, conspicuously long-pubescent (with dense, tangled hairs; except at apex), entire or minutely crenulate; upper surface green or dark green, dull or slightly glossy, with many stomata, minutely hairy along midrib; lower surface light green; petiole 1-4 (-8.5) mm, glabrous or sometimes hairy along margins (but hairs much shorter and more sparse than those on rest of leaf margin). Inflorescences with (3-) 6-14 flowers, lateral, unbranched, 1.5-5.1 cm, shorter to longer than subtending leaves; peduncle 0.4-1.7 cm; rachis 1.1-3.6 cm. Bracts alternate (lowermost often a more or less subopposite pair or a slightly offset “whorl” of three), deltoid, acute or subacute. Flowers, hermaphrodite. Pedicels (1.5-) 3-8 (-9) mm. Calyx (3.5-) 4-6.5 mm; lobes lanceolate or ovate or elliptic, obtuse to acute, with mixed glandular and eglandular cilia (eglandular most conspicuous, often long and tangled). Corolla tube hairy inside or glabrous, 3-4 x 3.5-4 mm, shortly and broadly funnelform, shorter than or equalling calyx; lobes mauve or blue at anthesis, ovate or elliptic, obtuse or subacute, patent to recurved, longer than corolla tube. Stamen filaments white or mauve, 4.5-5.5 mm, anthers mauve, 2.4-3.2 mm. Nectarial disc glabrous or densely ciliate. Ovary 1.7-2 mm; ovules 45-61 per locule, in 2-3 layers; style 4-6.5 mm. Capsules, subacute, 5.5-8.5 x (3.5-) 4-5.5 mm, loculicidal split extending ¼-½-way to base (mostly ¼ - 1/3). Seeds flattened, broad ellipsoid to discoid, winged or not winged, straw-yellow to brown, 0.9-2 x 0.9-1.5 mm, micropylar rim 3-0.5 mm.

FLOWERING
(August-) November-March (-June)

FLOWER COLOURS
Blue, White

FRUITING
November-April (-October)

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings and layered pieces. An excellent coastal shrub which does well in most gardens but rarely flowers in northern New Zealand. Hebe elliptica is extremely variable, and some critical selection of the range of wild forms is needed. Plants from near Charleston are particularly distinctive in that they retain their flat, creeping habit in cultivation.

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’.
 Elliptica: Elliptic
TAXONOMIC NOTES

Distinguished from other species by the combination of: large flowers; a prominent leaf bud sinus; robust, elliptic, oblong, obovate or oblanceolate leaves; and leaf margins conspicuously pubescent except on petioles and plicate-mucronate apices. Plants vary throughout the species’ range in terms of overall size, leaf shape and size, leaf thickness, internode length, branchlet pubescence and flower colour. Moore (in Allan 1961) also reported that some cultivated specimens from South America have terminal, as well as lateral, inflorescences.

Plants with broad, fleshy leaves from Kāpiti Island and Titahi Bay, Wellington, were described by Cockayne & Allan (1926) as a distinct variety, var. crassifolia. That variety is not considered sufficiently distinct, given variation in the species, to be formally recognised here.

There are specimens labelled “Lyttleton” in the Armstrong Herbarium at CHR, and two in WELT (44110, Herb. T. Kirk; 5298, G. Mair) apparently from the Chatham Islands. It is not unreasonable that the species occurs/occurred naturally in either area, but if so, it is surprising that its presence in these well collected localities has not been confirmed by subsequent wild collections, and they are omitted from the distribution. According to P. J. de Lange (pers. comm. 2005), there are plantings of V. elliptica on Chatham Island and the species is currently naturalised there around Waitangi.

The species hybridises with V. salicifolia at some sites where they co-occur, particularly on southern South Island. It is also one parent of a range of ornamental hybrid cultivars, including the widely grown H. xfranciscana (Heenan 1994; Metcalf 2001).

ATTRIBUTION


REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


MORE INFORMATION