

# Veronica elliptica

## COMMON NAME

kōkōmuka, 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

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

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 Island (scarce, known only from the west coast in scattered locations on the south Taranaki coast, on Kapiti Island, and Titahi Bay), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Snares Islands/Tini Heke, Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. Naturalised on Chatham Island (Rēkohu). Indigenous also to the Falkland Islands. Also naturalised on Maatsuyker Island, Tasmania.

## HABITAT

Grows in coastal areas, often in exposed places on rocks.



*Hebe elliptica*. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.



*Hebe elliptica*. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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 oblanceolate, coriaceous, flat or m-shaped in transverse section, (5)–12–31–(42) × (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 × 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 × (3.5)–4–5.5 mm, loculicidal split extending  $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ -way to base (mostly  $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{3}$ ). Seeds flattened, broad ellipsoid to discoid, winged or not winged, straw-yellow to brown, 0.9–2 × 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. ×franciscana* (Heenan 1994; Metcalf 2001).

## ATTRIBUTION

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

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.
- Bayly MJ, Kellow AV. 2006. An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Te Papa Press, Wellington, NZ. 388 p.
- Cockayne L, Allan HH. 1926. The present taxonomic status of the New Zealand species of *Hebe*. *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 57: 1–47.
- Heenan PB. 1994. The origin and identification of *Hebe ×franciscana* and its cultivars (Scrophulariaceae). *Horticulture in New Zealand* 5: 15–20.
- Metcalf LJ. 2001. International Register of *Hebe* Cultivars. New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.), Lincoln, NZ.
- Rozefelds ACF, Cave L, Morris DI, Buchanan AM. 1999. The weed invasion in Tasmania since 1970. *Australian Journal of Botany* 47: 23–48.
- Webb DA. 1972. *Hebe*. In: Tutin TG, Heywood VH, Burgess NA, Moore DM, Valentine DH, Walters SM, Webb DA. eds, Flora Europaea. Vol. 3, Diapensiaceae to Myoporaceae. Cambridge University Press, London, UK. pp. 251–2.

## MORE INFORMATION

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