

# Veronica epacridea

## 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

Low growing shrub with erect twigs bearing pairs of small curved reddish green or green thick fleshy rounded leaves that hardly narrow to a broad leaf stalk that touch those of the opposing leaf inhabiting South Island mountains. Dead leaves persist at base of twigs. Leaves to 9mm long.

## FLOWER COLOURS

White



At Lake Lyndon, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Rachael Range. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Spreading low shrub (sometimes more or less mat-like) to 0.4 m tall. Branches decumbent or ascending, old stems brown; branchlets green or purplish, puberulent to pubescent or glabrous (rarely), hairs bifarious (usually) or uniform; internodes 1-3 (-4.5) mm; leaves not readily abscising, persistent along the stem for some distance. Leaf bud tightly surrounded by recently diverged leaves. Leaves decussate, connate, usually patent to recurved or erect to erecto-patent; lamina broadly oblong or ovate or elliptic, rigid, somewhat concave or flat (plants from Otago or Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park lack thickened margins), (2.5-) 4-8 (-9) x 2.5-5.5 (-7) mm: apex obtuse or subacute; midrib thickened and evident below (usually forming a prominent keel, except on plants without a thickened leaf margin); margin not cartilaginous, conspicuously thickened (the outward manifestation of a rigid intramarginal vein) or not thickened (on plants that lack a marginal vein), commonly ciliate (toward base and, on one plant from Roys Peak, along entire margin) or minutely papillate or glabrous, sometimes tinged red, entire (usually) or minutely crenulate (rarely) or shallowly toothed (seen on one plant from Otago only); upper surface dark to light green, dull, with many stomata, glabrous; lower surface green, hairy toward base (along connate portion). Inflorescences with 2-8 flowers (per spike), terminal and lateral (arranged as spikes in the axils of little-altered leaves, forming a compact terminal flowering head), unbranched, (0.5-) 0.8-2.6 cm (whole flowering head). Bracts opposite and decussate or lowermost pair opposite, then subopposite or alternate above, connate, ovate or deltoid, obtuse or subacute or acuminate, sometimes hairy outside. Flowers hermaphrodite or female (on different plants). Pedicels absent. Calyx 3.4-5.8 mm; lobes oblong or ovate or elliptic or lanceolate, obtuse or subacute or acuminate. Corolla tube glabrous; tube of hermaphrodite flowers 3.8- 4.8 (-5.4) x 1.6-2.2 mm, cylindric and contracted at base, equalling or longer than calyx; tube of female flowers 2.4-4 x 1.3-1.9 mm, cylindric or funnelform, shorter than (only slightly) or equalling calyx; lobes white at anthesis, elliptic or ovate or obovate (narrowly), obtuse or subacute, suberect to recurved, shorter than corolla tube. Stamen filaments remaining erect, 0.1-1.2 mm (approximately 0.8-1.2 mm for stamens of hermaphrodite flowers, 0.1-0.4 mm for staminodes of female flowers); anthers yellow or pink to purple, 1.2-2.1 mm; sterile anthers of female flowers pink, 0.8-1.1 mm. Ovary sometimes hairy, 0.8-1.4 mm, apex (in septum view) obtuse or slightly emarginate; ovules 8-18 per locule, in 1-2 layers; style 2.5- 6(-7) mm (generally longer in hermaphrodite flowers than in female flowers), rarely hairy (especially toward base); stigma more prominent in female flowers. Capsules subacute, 2.7-4.5 x 1.5-2.6 mm, sometimes hairy, septicidal split extending  $\frac{3}{4}$ -way to base or completely to base, loculicidal split extending  $\frac{1}{4}$ - (mostly) to  $\frac{1}{2}$ -way to base. Seeds weakly flattened, ellipsoid or ovoid or obovoid, straw-yellow, 0.8-1 (-1.1) x 0.5-0.7 mm, micropylar rim 0.2-0.3 mm.

## DISTRIBUTION

South Island mountains, chiefly on or east of the Main Divide, from the Devil Range, North-West Nelson, to the Eyre and Livingstone Mountains, Southland.

## HABITAT

Open alpine areas on rock debris or scree. Together with *Veronica birleyi* and *Ranunculus grahamii*, it grows at the highest elevations known for any vascular plant in New Zealand (approximately 2900 m a.s.l in the Malte Brun Range, Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park).

## GENUS

*Veronica*

## FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Veronica epacridea* Hook.f.

## SYNONYMS

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

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

A widespread and somewhat variable species, distinguished from other members of “Connatae” (Bayly & Kellow, 2006) by: its small rigid leaves, which do not narrow towards the base; retained dead leaves along the length of the stem; and bracts and calyx lobes fringed by long hairs. Leaves are usually strongly keeled with a thickened margin, both characters the result of very thick, woody leaf veins. Plants from Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park and Otago often lack these leaf characters, causing frequent confusion in their identification. Variation is discussed in detail by Kellow et al. (2003).

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

December - February (-April)

## FRUITING

December - April (-September)

## 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’.

**epacridea:** Resembling plants in the family Epacridaceae (a Southern heath family now included in Ericaceae)

## NVS CODE

VEREPA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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.J., Kellow, A.V. 2006. An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa press pg. 114

Kellow, A. V., Bayly, M. J., Mitchell, K. A., Markham, K. R. and Brownsey, P. J. 2003. A taxonomic revision of *Hebe* informal group “Connatae” (Plantaginaceae), based on morphology and flavonoid chemistry. New Zealand Journal of Botany 41: 613-35.

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**

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

**MORE INFORMATION**

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

**PDF DATE**

25 May 2026