

# Veronica ligustrifolia

## 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 yellowish shrub bearing pairs of narrow leaves inhabiting eastern Northland. Young twigs and central vein of leaf yellow. Leaves variable, to 100mm long by 20mm wide, widest at base tapering to a narrow blunt tip. Flowers white to pinkish, in a spike to 8cm long.

## FLOWER COLOURS

White



*Hebe ligustrifolia* showing leaf bud and foliage, Ex Cult. (Waima Forest), 3 Sept 2006, Mt Albert, Auckland. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



In cultivation (Wanganui) ex Te Pahi. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 16/01/2011, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Openly branched, usually a bushy shrub or spreading low shrub, rarely a small tree (near Te Pahi), to 2.5 (-8) m tall. Branches erect to spreading, old stems brown or grey; branchlets olive-green to more or less orange or sometimes purplish, minutely puberulent, hairs uniform; internodes (1.9-) 4-10 (-17.5) mm; leaf decurrencies evident (often with a narrow ridge along medial line) or obscure. Leaf bud distinct; sinus absent. Leaves erecto-patent to patent; lamina elliptic or oblong-elliptic or linear-lanceolate, subcoriaceous, flat or slightly m-shaped in traverse section, (12-) 26-50 (-100) x (4.2-) 6- 10 (-20) mm; apex subacute to obtuse; 2 lateral veins arising from base or brochidodromous secondary veins evident in fresh leaves; midrib thickened below and either slightly thickened above or depressed to grooved above; margin sometimes narrowly cartilaginous, puberulent or glabrous, rarely tinged red; upper surface light to dark green (with midrib and base of lamina often yellow), dull to slightly glossy, without evident stomata, usually minutely hairy along midrib or sometimes glabrous; lower surface light green, glabrous (mostly) or hairy along midrib (only toward base) or rarely covered with minute glandular hairs (on youngest leaves). Inflorescences with (15-) 20-70 flowers, lateral, unbranched, (2.5-) 3-8 cm; peduncle 0.45-1.5 (-2.2) cm; rachis 1.5-6.5 cm. Bracts alternate or lowermost pair opposite, then subopposite or alternate above, ovate or narrowly lanceolate, acute or subacute, rarely hairy outside. Flowers hermaphrodite. Pedicels usually longer than or equal to bracts, 1-2.5 mm. Calyx (1.5-) 2-3 mm; lobes lanceolate or elliptic, acute or subacute or acuminate, sometimes hairy outside. Corolla tube hairy inside and sometimes outside, (1.2-) 1.6-3 x 1.8-2.2 mm, funnellform, shorter than (usually) or equalling or sometimes slightly longer than calyx; lobes white or tinged mauve at anthesis, ovate to deltoid or lanceolate or elliptic (last two states mostly in anterior lobes), acute or subacute, suberect to recurved, longer than corolla tube, bluntly ciliate (often) or with a few hairs toward base on inner surface and sometimes hairy outside. Stamen filaments white or mauve, 5-6.5 mm; anthers mauve or purple, (1.5-) 1.7- 2.5 mm. Ovary 0.75-1 mm; ovules approximately 6-15 per locule; style 4-6 mm. Capsules acute or subacute, 2.5-4 (-6) x 1.7-3 (-3.7) mm, loculicidal split extending  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ -way to base. Seeds flattened, broad ellipsoid to more or less discoid, straw-yellow, 0.9-1.5 x 0.7-1.1 mm, micropylar rim 0.2-0.4 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from most large-leaved "Occlusae" (see Bayley & Kellow 2006) by the combination of: leaf shape and size; having corolla tubes mostly shorter than calyces; and broad, acute, to subacute corolla lobes that are longer than the corolla tube. The leaves are generally less robust than those of *V. perbella* and broader than those of *V. rivularis* both of which have similar flowers. The outsides of calyces are frequently, though not always, glabrous; this can distinguish plants with only fruit or buds from *V. stricta* var. *stricta*, with which it may co-occur. It is probably most similar to *V. flavida* (see notes under that species); both often have midribs that are conspicuously yellow above.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to Northland, North Island, from North Cape to Whangarei Heads, mostly on the eastern and northern coasts (between North Cape and Cape Reinga). It might also occur in western Northland (see notes below).

## HABITAT

Grows chiefly in near-coastal sites in scrub, in forest, on cliffs or on slips.

## GENUS

*Veronica*

## FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Veronica ligustrifolia* A.Cunn.

## SYNONYMS

*Hebe ligustrifolia* (A.Cunn.) Cockayne et Allan

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

It is possible that *V. ligustrifolia* also occurs in western Northland, particularly around and south of Hokianga Harbour, including Waima (P. J. de Lange pers. comm. 2005) and Waipoua forests. Some similar specimens from that area are identified here as *V. flavida* (but see notes under that species). We have had few opportunities for fieldwork in these areas and cannot identify all herbarium specimens with confidence.

*V. ligustrifolia* is variable in habit (from sprawling to, more commonly, erect) and leaf size, and two informal segregates have been proposed: *Hebe* sp. "m" of Druce (1980) and Eagle (1982), also called *H. "Whangarei"* by Druce (1993); *H. aff. ligustrifolia* of de Lange & Murray (2002), databased at AK as *H. ligustrifolia* "var. Surville" and also listed, without an informal name, by Druce (1993). Neither is considered sufficiently distinct for recognition here.

A suite of specimens from Matai Bay, Karikari Peninsula (e.g. WELT 81894-81896), representing the only *Hebe* seen there, may have some affinity to *V. ligustrifolia*, but they are difficult to identify with any certainty. They have: long hairs on the branchlets, undersides of midribs, leaf margins and outsides of calyx lobes (all uncommon in *V. ligustrifolia*); corolla tubes slightly to conspicuously longer than calyces; and leaf flavonoids roughly intermediate between those of *V. stricta* var. *stricta* and *V. ligustrifolia* (Mitchell et al. in prep.).

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

January-December

## FRUITING

January-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'.

**ligustrifolia:** From the genus Ligustrum privet and the Greek word phylum 'leaf', meaning privet-leaved

## NVS CODE

VERLIG

## 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, M.J., Kellow, A.V. 2006. An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa press pg. 196-197.
- de Lange, P. J. and Murray, B. G. 2002. Contributions to a chromosome atlas of the New Zealand Flora - 37. Miscellaneous families. New Zealand Journal of Botany 40:1-23.
- Druce, A. P. 1993. Indigenous vascular plants of New Zealand. 9th revision. Unpublished checklist held at Landcare Research, Lincoln, New Zealand. Copy also held in the library of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.
- Druce, A. P. 1980. Trees, shrubs, and Lianes of New Zealand (including wild hybrids). Unpublished checklist held at Landcare Research, Lincoln, New Zealand. (Copy also held in the library of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.)
- Eagle, A. 1982. *Eagle's Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand*. 2nd series. Auckland: Collins.
- 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-ligustrifolia/>

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026