Veronica lycopodioides

COMMON NAMES
whipcord hebe

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

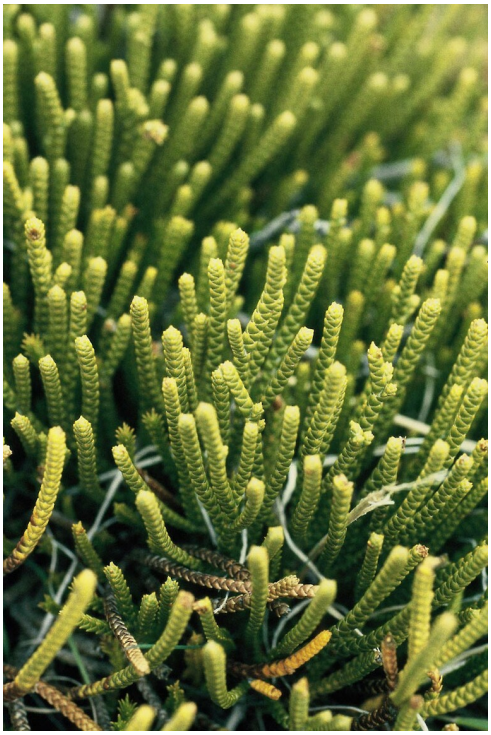
STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Spreading low growing shrub bearing yellowish-green erect narrow short scaly twigs inhabiting South Island mountains. Twigs 2.3-3.3mm wide. Leaves scale-like, striped, closely packed, tip pointed, clasping stem, sometimes with a hairy margin (lens needed). Flowers white, in groups of 6-16 at tips of twigs.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Spreading low or bushy shrub to 1 m tall, of whipcord form. Branches ascending or decumbent or erect; internodes (0. 55-) 0.8-1.3 (- 1.55) mm; branchlets, including leaves, (1.8-) 2.3-3.3 (-4.2) mm wide; connate leaf bases hairy; nodal joint distinct, usually hidden (but sometimes barely) or exposed; leaves not readily abscising, persistent along the stem for some distance. Leaves connate, appressed; lamina not thickened near the apex; apex mucronate (usually) to subacute; margin ciliate or ciliolate; lower surface dark green to yellowish-green, with prominent shallow veins that give a ribbed or striped appearance (at least faintly), dull to slightly glossy. Juvenile leaves crenate to pinnatifid, ciliate (near base and on lower surface). Reversion leaves entire or incised to pinnatifid, glabrous. Inflorescences with (4-) 6-16 (-20) flowers, terminal, unbranched, (0.35-) 0.5-1.6 (-1.9) cm; rachis hairy (with long, white, tangled hairs). Bracts opposite and decussate, connate, broadly deltoid, acuminate to subacute. Flowers hermaphrodite. Calyx 2.8-3.5 mm, 4-5-lobed (5th lobe small, posterior); lobes lanceolate or elliptic or oblong, obtuse to acute, with mixed glandular and eglandular cilia (glandular hairs usually obscured by long eglandular hairs). Corolla tube hairy inside, 2.5-3.2 x 1.1-1.3 mm, cylindric, longer than or approximately equalling calyx; lobes white at anthesis, elliptic or ovate, obtuse (posterior sometimes emarginate), suberect to patent, shorter to longer than corolla tube. Stamen filaments 2.5-3.6 mm; anthers magenta, approximately 1-1.3 mm. Ovary 0.7-0.8 mm, apex (in septum view) didymous; ovules approximately 13-16 per locule, marginal on a flattened placenta (but sometimes recurved and appearing scattered), in 1-2 layers; style 2.5-7 mm. Capsules obtuse, (1.7-) 2.2-3.4 x (1.3-) 1.8-2.4 mm, loculicidal split extending ¼-½-way to base. Seeds flattened, ellipsoid, more or less finely papillate, pale brown, 0.9-1.5 x approximately 0.7 mm, micropylar rim approximately 0.2 mm.

Avalanche peak, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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

SIMILAR TAXA
Similar to *V. poppelwellii*, from which it is distinguished by its strongly mucronate, acute or apiculate leaf apices.

DISTRIBUTION
Mountains of South Island, chiefly on or east of the Main Divide, from the Bryant Range in the north to the Kakanui Mountains in the south.

HABITAT
Grows in penalpine grassland and subalpine shrubland.

GENUS
Veronica

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica lycopodioides Hook.f.

SYNONYMS
Hebe lycopodioides (Hook.f.) Andersen, Hebe lycopodioides (Hook.f.) Cockayne et Allan nom. superf., nom. illeg., Leonohebe lycopodioides (Hook.f.) Heads var. lycopodioides, Leonohebe lycopodioides var. patula (G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson) Heads, Hebe lycopodioides subsp. patula (G.Simpson & J.S.Thomson) Wagstaff et Wardle, Hebe lycopodioides var. patula G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Plants from near Lewis Pass were included in *var. patula* (Simpson & Thomson 1943; Ashwin, in Allan 1961) or *subsp. patula* (Wagstaff & Wardle 1999), on the basis of their less mucronate leaves, often slender branchlets and usually low-growing habit. Despite obvious geographic trends in these characters, specimens cannot be separated into clear-cut morphological groups, and no infraspecific taxa are recognised here.
Historical specimens of H.J. Matthews (WELT I 7415, 17420; AK 8215, 8216) suggest the species may also occur in the Greenstone Valley and Humboldt Mountains, western side of Lake Wakatipu, but these localities have not been substantiated by recent collections (and at least some of Matthews specimens are based on cultivated plants, and there might have been confusion regarding original provenance).

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
(November-) December-February (-April)

FRUITING
January-April (-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’.
lycopodioides: Resembling a club moss, from the genus Lycopodium and -oides a Greek suffix which means ‘resembling’.

NVS CODE
VERLYC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 40

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
Allan, H. H. 1961. *Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1.* Wellington: Government Printer.
Bayly, M.J., Kellow, A.V. 2006. An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa press pg. 100.
Simpson, G. and Thomson, J. S. 1943. Notes on some New Zealand plants and descriptions of new species. *Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand 73*: 155- 71.
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
Wagstaff, S. J. and Wardle, P. 1999. Whipcord hebes - systematics, distribution, ecology and evolution. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 37*: 17-39.

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

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-lycopodioides/

PDF DATE
25 May 2026