Veronica maccaskillii

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPT, RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Tight bushy shrub bearing pairs of small rounded leaves inhabiting north Canterbury limestone. Leaves 4-9 mm long. Flowers pinkish, in clusters of 10-60.

FLOWER COLOURS
Violet/Purple, White



Habitat at Weka Pass. Photographer: Carol Jensen, Licence: CC BY.



Weka Pass. Photographer: Carol Jensen, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Spreading, semi-divaricating shrub 50-300 mm tall. Branches prostrate to decumbent. Leaves erecto-patent to spreading, oblanceolate to obovate spathulate, 4-9(-15) x 2-5(-7) mm, apex obtuse to rounded, margin entire to crenate, with 0-2(-3) pairs of crenations. Upper leaf surface green to bronze-green, dull. Petiole 1-2(-3) mm long. Inflorescence 10-60-flowered. Calyx lobes 5. Corolla white or mauve at anthesis, in which case fading thereafter. Stamen filaments inserted at middle of corolla tube, 3-3.5 mm long. Nectarial disc glabrous to glandular-ciliate. Ovary glabrous or sparsely hairy. Style (4-)6-7 mm long, glabrous, sometimes sparsely hairy at the base. Stigma capitate. Capsule turgid, emarginate, sometimes appearing almost didymous. Seeds 1.2-1.6 x 0.6-0.7 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
Allied to *Veronica raoulii* from which it differs by the denser, almost divaricating growth form, smaller, more rounded, barely toothed or entire leaves, and by the mauve to white corollas.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand, South Island. Known only from North Canterbury in the vicinity of Waipara, Waikari, Mt Cass, Mt Brown and Okuku area.

HABITAT
A limestone endemic. Favouring cracked and jointed limestone outcrops, where it is usually found in semi-shaded situations.

THREATS
Seriously threatened through habitat loss and weed invasion (particularly *Festuca rubra*). This plant is a very narrow-range endemic, whose limestone bluff habitat is now largely surrounded by pasture. Many of the known locations are now either too dry, or suboptimal due to weed invasion from adjacent pasture. Recruitment failure is a problem at many sites.

GENUS
Veronica

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica maccaskillii (Allan) Heenan

SYNONYMS
Veronica raoulii subsp. maccaskillii (Allan) Garn.-Jones; Hebe raoulii var. maccaskillii Allan, Parahebe raoulii subsp. maccaskillii (Allan) Heads, Heliohebe raoulii subsp. maccaskillii (Allan) Garn.-Jones; Heliohebe maccaskillii (Allan) D.A.Norton et Molloy

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Heliohebe maccaskillii was proposed at species rank by Norton & Molloy (2009). Their decision was based on the symtopy of this species with Heliohebe raouliiand also by consistent morphological and ecological differences between both species. This view was accepted by Heenan (2012) when transferring this taxon over to *Veronica* at species rank.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October to November

FRUITING
December to January

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
May be grown from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. However can be difficult to maintain and dislikes humid climates. Probably does best in a well drained, sunny site, growing within a soil subtly enriched with base-rich minerals.

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’.

NVS CODE
VERMCC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR
2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered
Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1993: *Heliohebe* (Scrophulariaceae Veroniceae), a new genus segregated from *Hebe*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 31*: 323-33.
Garnock-Jones, P.J.; Albach, D.; Briggs, B.G. 2007: Botanical names in Southern Hemisphere *Veronica* (Plantaginaceae): sect. *Detzneria*, ect. *Hebe*, and sect. *Labiatoides*. *Taxon 56*: 571-582.
Heenan, P.B. 2012: Taxonomic notes on the New Zealand flora: new names in *Veronica* (Plantaginaceae). *New Zealand Journal of Botany 50*: 87-88.
Norton, D.A.; Molloy, B.P.J. 2009: *Heliohebe maccaskillii* (Plantaginaceae) - a new rank for a threatened limestone endemic, North Canterbury, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 47*: 405-409.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (9 August 2009). Description based on Garnock-Jones (1994).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-maccaskillii/

PDF DATE

08 June 2026