Veronica macrocalyx var. humilis

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 green thick fleshy rounded leaves that hardly narrow to a broad leaf stalk inhabiting northern South Island mountains. Leaves to 11 mm long, about as wide as long. Flowers white , almost hidden by long narrow teeth of base.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

Mt Peel, Nelson, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Mt Peel, Nelson, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Subshrub to 20cm high. Branches prostrate to decumbent, old stems brown; branchlets green to purplish, glabrous or puberulent, hairs bifarious; internodes 1-5.5 (-10.9) mm; leaves not readily abscising, persisting on stem, or decaying leaving basal parts attached. Leaf bud tightly surrounded by recently diverged leaves. Leaves often slightly keeled, decussate to slightly subdistichous, connate, erecto-patent to patent; lamina obovate to spathulate or elliptic to ovate or rhomboid, fleshy, concave, 5.5-11 (-13.5) x (2-) 3-7.5 (-8.5) mm; apex obtuse; midrib slightly thickened below and slightly depressed to grooved above; not cartilaginous, not thickened, glabrous or glandular-ciliate and sometimes minutely papillate, usually tinged red, entire or rarely shallowly toothed; upper surface green, dull to glossy, with many stomata, glabrous; lower surface green, dull to glossy; petiole (1-) 2-5 mm, hairy along margins. Inflorescences with 2-12 flowers per spike, 3-12 spikes per flowering head, terminal and lateral (arranged, often laxly, in a flowering head), unbranched, (0.5-) 1-3 (-4.3) cm (total length of flowering head), spikes about equal to subtending leaves (flowering head usually longer than subtending leaves); peduncle approximately 0.1 cm, hairy or glabrous; rachis 0.3-0.4 (-0.6) cm (longest when growing in shade). Bracts lowermost pair opposite, then subopposite or alternate above, connate or rarely free, lanceolate to linear or sometimes deltoid, subacute (usually) or obtuse, margins glabrous or hairy. Flowers hermaphrodite or female (on different plants). Pedicels absent. Calyx 4.5-7 mm, 4-5-lobed (5th lobe small, posterior); lobes red at apex, oblong to linear, or deltoid (sometimes, in Nelson populations only), subacute to obtuse or occasionally acute, with minute mixed glandular and eglandular cilia (usually) or glabrous. Corolla tube glabrous; tube of hermaphrodite flowers (2.5-) 4-6 x 1.5-2.5 mm, cylindric, shorter to longer than calyx (sometimes); tube of female flowers 3-4 x 1.5-2.2 mm, funnelform, shorter than calyx; lobes white at anthesis, ovate (usually) to elliptic, subacute to obtuse, patent to recurved (with age), shorter than (usually) to longer than (rarely) corolla tube. Stamen filaments remaining erect, 0.5-1.3 mm; anthers magenta, 1-1.9 mm; sterile anthers of female flowers white, 0.8 -1.1 mm. Ovary narrowly ovoid to conical, 2-2.5 mm; ovules 18-28 per locule, in 1-3 layers; style 3-8 mm on hermaphrodite flowers, 5-6 mm on female flowers; stigma larger in female flowers. Capsules acute to subacute, 3.5-4.5 (-5.5) x 2-3.5 mm, loculicidal split extending ¼-½-way to base. Seeds flattened, ellipsoid or more or less discoid, straw-yellow, 0.7-1 x 0.5-0.9 mm, micropylar rim 0.1-0.3 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from V. haastii, in which it was included by Cheeseman (1906) and Moore (in Allan 1961), by its: bright green, fleshy, petiolate and often subdistichous leaves; sometimes lax flowering head; usually linear calyx lobes; narrow acute capsule. V. var. humilis is more variable in terms of leaf shape (elliptic or rhomboidal to spathulate), leaf margins (smooth to papillose or erose), and calyx shape and length (lanceolate to linear). V. var. macrocalyx is relatively uniform in morphology, all specimens having bright green, spathulate leaves with cartilaginous leaf margins and green, linear calyx lobes.
The species commonly grows near V. epacridea.

DISTRIBUTION

Mountains of Nelson and Marlborough, South Island, south from the Anatoki Range to the Spenser Mountains, and Mount Richmond.

HABITAT

It grows in rocky alpine herb fields, on rock debris or scree.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica macrocalyx var. humilis (G.Simpson) Garn.-Jones

SYNONYMS

Hebe haastii var. humilis (G.Simpson) L.B.Moore, Leonohebe haastii var. humilis (G.Simpson) Heads, Hebe macrocalyx var. humilis G.Simpson

TAXONOMIC NOTES
In northwest Nelson, *V.* var. *humilis* sometimes grows in shaded rock crevices and sinkholes, and these “shade form” plants have an etiolated, more sprawling habit with much longer internodes, and darker, spathulate and often toothed leaves (WELT 80 745).
On the basis of cultivated specimens, var. *humilis* was also recorded by Simpson (1952) from Mt French, west Otago (CHR 243479), and Mt Elliot, Southland (CHR 97169); neither of these localities is represented in the distribution.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
(September-) November-March

FRUITING
(November-) December-April (-October)

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’.
macrocalyx: From the Greek macros ‘large’ and calyx
humilis: Lowest, dwarf, small, slight

NVS CODE
VERMVH

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 Data Deficient | Qualifiers: TL 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. 116-118.
Cheeseman, T. F. 1906. Manual of the New Zealand Flora.1st edition. Wellington: Government Printer,
Simpson, G. 1952. Notes on some New Zealand plants and descriptions of new species (no. 5). Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand 79: 419-35.

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

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-macrocalyx-var-humilis/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026