

Veronica obtusata

COMMON NAMES

hebe

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, CI, DPS, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Very low growing sprawling shrub bearing pairs of dark green leathery elliptical leaves and short spikes of pinkish flowers inhabiting coastal Waitakere and Kawhia. Leaves m-shaped in cross section, 20–55mm long by 11–20mm wide, margin hairy (lens needed). Flower spike to 13cm long.

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Spreading low shrub to 0.5 m tall. Branches prostrate or decumbent, old stems brown or grey; branchlets red-brown, puberulent, hairs bifarious or uniform (sometimes very sparse); internodes (2–) 10–39 mm; leaf decurrencies evident (often with a narrow ridge along medial line) or obscure. Leaf bud distinct; sinus absent. Leaves decussate to subdistichous, erecto-patent to patent; lamina obovate (usually) or elliptic or circular or oblong. Coriaceous, flat or slightly m-shaped in transverse section, (6–) 20–55 x (6.5–) 11–20 (–28.5) mm; apex obtuse or rounded or rarely retuse; margin cartilaginous, pubescent (usually very conspicuously), often tinged red; upper surface dark green, glossy, without evident stomata, usually hairy along midrib; lower surface light green, hairy along midrib and sometimes covered with minute glandular hairs (when young). Inflorescences with 34–88 flowers, lateral, unbranched, 3.8–12.6 cm; peduncle 0.7–3.1 cm; rachis 3.2–9.5 cm. Bracts alternate, lanceolate or narrowly oblong, acute or subacute, sometimes hairy outside. Flowers hermaphrodite. Pedicels 1–3.3 mm sometimes recurved in fruit. Calyx 2.5–3.5 mm; lobes narrowly elliptic or oblong, obtuse to acute, often hairy outside. Corolla tube hairy inside and sometimes outside, 2.3–4 x 1.7–2 mm (usually quite asymmetric—longer on anterior side), funnelform, about equalling or longer than calyx; lobes white or tinged mauve at anthesis. white or mauve with age, ovate or lanceolate or elliptic, obtuse or subacute, suberect to patent, longer to shorter than corolla tube (varies on one flower because of asymmetric division of corolla), hairy inside or at least with a few hairs toward base on inner surface and sometimes ciliate (near base) or hairy outside. Stamen filaments white or mauve, 4.7–7.5 mm; anthers buff or mauve, 1.5–2.2 mm. Ovary sometimes sparsely hairy, 0.8–1 mm; ovules approximately 10–13 per locule; style 5–7 mm, sometimes sparsely hairy. Capsules acute or subacute, 3.7–4.5 x 2–2.3 mm, sometimes hairy, loculicidal split extending one-quarter way to base. Seeds flattened, ellipsoid to discoid, straw-yellow, 0.9–1.3 x 0.7–0.9 mm, micropylar rim approximately 0.2 mm.



Piha. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Flowers, Anawhata. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 25/04/2019, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from most large-leaved "Occlusae" (Bayly & Kellow, 2006) by the combination of its low-growing habit, leaf shape and size, the colour of young branchlets, and the usually conspicuous pubescence on the leaf margin. It resembles *V. bishopiana*, which can be distinguished from *V. obtusata* by its much longer lanceolate, acuminate, dark-green to maroon tinged leaves, which lack hairy margins.

DISTRIBUTION

North Island - Occurs near the west coast of North Island, chiefly west of Auckland between Muriwai and Manukau Heads, but also further south, at Kawhia Harbour.

HABITAT

Strictly coastal. Usually found on sparsely vegetated steep slopes and banks, in low windswept scrub and on cliff faces and rock stacks. May be found threaded through carices, *Poa anceps* and flax (*Phormium tenax*).

THREATS

Not Threatened. However, close to extinction within the Kawhia part of its range where it only secure on some of the southern islets within the harbour.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica obtusata Cheeseman

SYNONYMS

Veronica macroura var. *dubia* Cheeseman, *Hebe obtusata* (Cheeseman) Cockayne et Allan

TAXONOMIC NOTES

de Lange (1996) suggests that it sometimes hybridises with *V. stricta* var. *stricta*., *V. var. macoura* and in the Waitakere Ranges with *V. bishopiana*. The Kawhia populations are unusual. All are associated with former Maori habitations and pa - possibly these southerly outliers were deliberately planted by Maori. This would be worth investigating (de Lange pers. comms.)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(November-) January-August

FRUITING

(November-) January-September

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed, semi-hardwood cuttings and layered pieces. An attractive prostrate shrub for a sunny border, bank or wall. Can be grown through sedges and grasses. Flower colour is variable in the wild and this species could do with some critical horticultural selection to obtain the more brightly coloured forms

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'.

obtusata: Blunt

NVS CODE

VEROBT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: PD, RR, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NStr, PF, TL Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the ["Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland"](#) Simpkins E 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. 186.

de Lange, P. J. 1996. *Hebe bishopiana* (Scrophulariaceae) - an endemic species of the Waitakere Ranges, west Auckland, New Zealand. New Zealand Journal of Botany 34: 187–94.

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-obtusata/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026