

Veronica punicea

COMMON NAMES

hebe

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low sprawling shrub bearing pairs of dark green narrow leaves and short (to 10cm long) spikes of red flowers inhabiting the northern tip of the North Island. Leaves 20–75mm long by 10–25mm wide. Leaf bud without gap at base. Flower spike often with unopened flowers towards the tip.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Violet/Purple

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

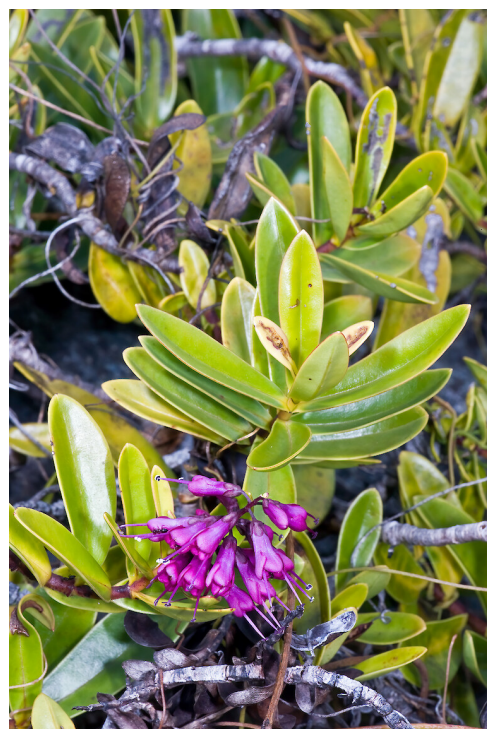
Low spreading to suberect shrub up to 1.5 x 0.7 m. Branches decumbent, sub-erect to erect, older stems grey or grey-brown; branchlets green or yellowish, finely puberulent; internodes 1.5–23 mm; leaf decurrencies obscure. Leaf bud without sinus. Leaves patent to erecto-patent, 16–75 x 6–25 mm; upper surface dark green to green, glossy, under side similar but paler and dull; lamina narrowly to broadly elliptic to oblong-elliptic or obovate, coriaceous, flat or m-shaped in cross-section, apex often apiculate, obtuse to subacute, margin finely ciliolate or glabrous, hairy along midrib. Inflorescence a 16–60-flowered, lateral, unbranched raceme, 20–100 mm long, often with many unopened flowers toward apex; peduncle 6–35 mm, rachis 15–75 mm. Bracts alternate (lowermost pair often subopposite), ovate, broadly ovate, elliptic, or narrowly deltoid, obtuse, or subacute. Flowers with pedicels 1–7 mm and always longer than bracts. Calyx 1.9–4 mm; lobes ovate, obtuse or subacute. Corolla tube 3–5.5 mm, hairy or glabrous inside, longer than calyx; lobes magenta to deep violet at anthesis, rose pink or violet with age, ovate, broadly ovate to elliptic, obtuse, erect to suberect, longer or shorter than corolla tube, sometimes hairy inside; corolla throat magenta or violet. Stamen filaments 5.5–10.5 mm, magenta or violet; anthers 0.9–1.6 mm, red-purple. Ovary 0.9–1.5 mm; style 7.5–11.8 mm. Capsules 4.5–8.5 x 4–5 mm, subacute, hairy. Seeds 1.7–2.4 x 1.2–1.8 mm, pale to dark brown, broad ellipsoid to discoid, finely papillate, flattened.

SIMILAR TAXA

Veronica speciosa is the only other species with similar coloured flowers, it differs by its larger overall habit, much larger broadly elliptic to obovate-oblong or oblong leaves with obtuse to retuse apices, and by the leaf margin, which is distinctly enlarged, red-pigmented, and finely pubescent. *Veronica speciosa* grows well south of the only known habitat for *V. punicea* - the Surville Cliffs and adjacent ultramafic outcrops of the North Cape Scientific Reserve. *V. speciosa* has never been found growing on ultramafic substrates, whilst *V. punicea* is an ultramafic endemic.



Surville Cliffs, October 1996. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Hikurua / de Surville Cliffs, Te Pahi. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 08/11/2007, Licence: CC BY.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, North Cape area only where it is confined to the 120 ha exposure of serpentinite rocks at the Surville Cliffs.

HABITAT

Confined to serpentinite (ultramafic) rocks and associated soils of the Surville Cliffs and adjacent plateau, at North Cape. Here it grows in low windshorn scrub, on open clay pans, on boulder fall, adjacent semi-stable scree and along cliff faces.

THREATS

Abundant within its only known habitat, the serpentinite rock exposure of the Surville Cliffs, North Cape. This unique habitat is threatened by fires, weed invasions and possums, pigs and feral horses and cattle.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica punicea Garn.-Jones;

SYNONYMS

Veronica speciosa var. brevifolia Cheeseman Hebe brevifolia (Cheeseman) de Lange, Hebe macrocarpa var. brevifolia (Cheeseman) L.B.Moore

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

April - October (but sporadic flowering common all year round)

FRUITING

July- January (but fruits may be present throughout the year)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from semi-hardwood cuttings. Prefers full sun in a well drained soil. Does best when frequently enriched with serpentinite or high magnesium fertiliser

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'.

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 118

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, ST, OL

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J. 1997: *Hebe brevifolia* (Scrophulariaceae); an ultramafic endemic of the Surville Cliffs, North Cape, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 35(1): 1-8.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description based on de Lange (1997)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/veronica-punicea/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026