Veronica quadrifaria

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
Low-growing, green, leafless square twigs inhabiting eastern South Island mountains north of the Waitaki River. Leaves scale-like, triangular, overlapping, clasping stem, margin with pale hairs (lens needed). Flowers white, in clusters of 2-6 towards tips of twigs.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Subshrub to 0.3 m tall, of semiwhipcord form. Branches decumbent; internodes (0.15-) 0.2- 0.7 (-0.8) mm; branchlets, including leaves, (1.3-) 1.5-2.4 (-2.7) mm wide, square in transverse section (or almost so, especially older pans of branchlets, away from the apex); connate leaf bases glabrous; leaves not readily abscising, persistent along the stem for some distance. Leaf bud tightly surrounded by recently diverged leaves. Leaves connate, appressed; lamina deltoid (often broadly so) or semi-circular (more rarely); apex obtuse to acute; venation not evident in fresh leaves; margin ciliate; lower surface light to dark green. Inflorescences with 2-6 flowers, lateral, unbranched, 0.3-0.5 (-0.75) cm; peduncle 0.1-0.35 cm; rachis hairy or glabrous. Bracts opposite and decussate, free (usually) or connate, deltoid (and lowermost often keeled beneath), obtuse. Flowers male or female (on different plants). Pedicels absent or if evident then always shorter than bracts, 0-0.5 mm, glabrous or hairy. Calyx 1.3-2.2 mm; lobes deltoid or ovate or oblong, obtuse, with mixed glandular and eglandular cilia (glandular cilia may not be apparent, stalk cell may be very short), rarely hairy outside. Corolla tube glabrous; tube of male flowers approximately 1-1.1 mm, shorter than calyx; tube of female flowers 0.5-1.2 x approximately 1 mm, contracted at base (and more or less expanded around middle), shorter than or equalling calyx; lobes white or pink at anthesis, elliptic or ovate or rhomboid (and auriculate above contracted base), obtuse, suberect to recurved, longer than corolla tube, papillate inside. Stamen filaments remaining erect, 1.1-1 .4 mm (female approximately 1.1 mm; male approximately 1.4 mm); anthers magenta, 1-1.1 mm; sterile anthers of female flowers magenta, approximately 0.5 mm. Nectarial disc glabrous or ciliate. Ovary ovoid or ellipsoid, 0.4-0.6 mm; ovules 4-5 per locule, in 2 vertical rows on placenta; style 1.5-2.2 mm; stigma usually larger in female flowers. Capsules angustiseptate, obtuse, 1.6-2.2 mm long, 1.3-2 mm thick, septicidal split extending 1/3 to all way to base, loculicidal split extending ½-¾-way to base. Seeds weakly flattened to more or less trigonal, ellipsoid, brown, 1-1.2 x 0.5-0.7 mm, micropylar rim 0.2-0.3 mm. 211 = 42.



Grampian range, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most similar to *V. tetrasticha;* presently the two species are differentiated by the profile of the transverse section of branchlets, cruciform in *V. tetrasticha*, square in *V. quadrifaria*. However branchlets vary between the two extremes and differences are not always clear-cut.

DISTRIBUTION
South Island: Eastern mountains of the Main Divide, from Black Birch Range, Marlborough, to Kirkliston Range, south Canterbury.

HABITAT
Alpine rock outcrops and scree.

GENUS
Veronica

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica quadrifaria Kirk

SYNONYMS
Mitrasacme cheesemanii Buchanan, Hebe cheesemanii (Buchanan) Cockayne et Allan, Leonohebe cheesemanii (Buchanan) Heads

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Possibly intergrades with *V. tumida,* and differences from *V. tetrasticha* are not always clear-cut.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
December-January

FRUITING
December-February

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’.

NVS CODE
VERQUA

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

Bayly, M.J. & Kellow, A.V. 2006: *An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes*. Wellington, Te Papa Press. 296 pp.
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-quadrifaria/

PDF DATE

27 May 2026