

Veronica senex

COMMON NAMES

old man parahebe, bearded speedwell

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Subshrub, 350-500 mm tall. Stems grey (pale). Branches decumbent to ascending. Branchlets brown, black or purplish. Vegetative internodes 10-60 mm long. Stem bifariously or uniformly eglandular-pubescent, rarely almost glabrous. Leaves erecto-patent to spreading. Lamina lanceolate, oblanceolate, ovate or elliptic, 20-80 × 10-25 mm. Upper surface of leaves dull, green or dark green; lower surface dull, pale green, pinkish or whitish. Leaf hairs on both surfaces eglandular, numerous, sparse or rarely absent. Apex acute to subacute. Base cuneate. Margin pubescent, rarely glabrous, serrate. Marginal teeth or lobes in 3-13 pairs. Petiole 3-7 mm long. Inflorescence racemose 10-20-flowered, unbranched, 100-250 mm long at fruiting. Indumentum of peduncle, rachis, and pedicels sparse to moderately dense. Eglandular hairs of inflorescence patent, white or colourless. Peduncle 40-70 mm long, eglandular-pubescent. Rachis 70-100 mm long, eglandular-pubescent or rarely glabrous. Bracts alternate, lanceolate, subacute to acuminate, eglandular-hairy below and eglandular-hairy above (then at apex only). Bract margins entire. Pedicels 8-21 mm long, eglandular-pubescent. Flowers white at anthesis, colour ring magenta, nectar guides obscure or absent, confined to posterior corolla lobe if present, magenta, corolla throat yellow or greenish; calyx 4-lobed, 4-5 mm long, lobes glabrous, linear to lanceolate, acute, margins entire; calyx hairs on both surfaces, eglandular. Corolla 10-12 mm diameter; tube 1.0-2.0 × 1.0-1.5 mm wide, hairy inside, hairs short. Posterior corolla lobe circular, obtuse or emarginate, 5 × 5 mm. Lateral corolla lobes circular, obtuse, longitudinally folded around stamens, 4.5-5.0 × 6.0-6.5 mm. Anterior corolla lobe elliptic to oblong, obtuse, 4.0-5.0 × 3.0-3.5 mm. Stamen filaments white, 4 mm long. Anthers white, 1 mm long. Nectarial disc ciliate. Ovary ellipsoid, emarginate, eglandular hairy, 1.0-1.5 mm long. Style 3.0-4.5 mm long. Capsules weakly flattened, truncate to emarginate, 2.0-4.0 × 2.5-3.5 mm, glabrous or hairy. Hairs eglandular, if present. Septicidal split of capsule extending to base. Loculicidal split of capsule extending 1/3-1/2-way to base. Seeds obovoid, pale brown, 0.5-0.8 × 0.6 mm



Anatori limestone bluffs, Kahurangi National Park, NW Nelson. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Anatori limestone bluffs, Kahurangi National Park, NW Nelson. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Veronica senex is most similar to *V. lanceolata* from which it is chiefly distinguished by its much larger size and robust growth habit, normally dull grey-green, elliptic rather than green, bronze-green, light green or dark green, glossy or dull, lanceolate to ovate leaves, which are usually finely eglandular-pubescent rather than glabrous, and by the calyces, ovary and capsules which are covered in short, straight, pale hairs rather than glabrous.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North-West Nelson local in the extreme western portion

HABITAT

A basicole inhabiting limestone and calcareous sandstone cliffs and associated talus within lowland stream and river systems

THREATS

Listed as At Risk / Naturally Uncommon qualified 'RR' [Range Restricted] by de Lange et al. (2013) because it is known from only a few small populations in scattered sites along lowland river and stream systems. The overall population size is small but no obvious threats to this species are known.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica senex (Garn.-Jones) Garn.-Jones

SYNONYMS

Parahebe senex Garn.-Jones

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November - March (-July)

FRUITING

December - August

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from cuttings, rooted pieces and fresh seed. Dislikes humidity.

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

$2n = 42$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Rolfe, J.R.; Champion, P.D.; Courtney, S.P.; Heenan, P.B.; Barkla, J.W.; Cameron, E.K.; Norton, D.A.; Hitchmough, R.A. 2013: Conservation status of New Zealand Indigenous Vascular Plants. New Zealand Threat Classification Series 3. Wellington, Department of Conservation. 70p.

Garnock-Jones, P.J.; Lloyd, D.G. 2003: A taxonomic revision of *Parahebe* (Plantaginaceae) in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42: 181-232.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange (5 October 2006). Description adapted from Garnock-Jones and Lloyd (2003).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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