

Veronica townsonii

COMMON NAMES

hebe

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bush shrub bearing pairs of narrow leaves that have a row of small pits near the margin on the underside of the leaf. Inhabiting lowland limestone in Northwest Nelson. Leaves to 80mm long by 9mm wide, glossy, paler underneath, parallel-edged. Leaf bud with narrow gap between bases of leaves.

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White



Garden plant in flower, Virginia Heights, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 10/10/2019, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Domatia on underside of leaves; garden plant, Virginia Heights, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 10/10/2019, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Openly branched bushy shrub to 2.5 m tall. Branches erect, old stems (at least on herbarium specimens) brown or greenish-grey; branchlets green or brown or black, puberulent (sometimes with short, harsh antrorse hairs with swollen bases) or glabrous, hairs bifarious; internodes (2-) 5-15 (-18) mm; leaf decurrencies evident. Leaf bud distinct; sinus broad and acute. Leaves erecto-patent to recurved (with age); lamina lanceolate (often narrowly) or linear, coriaceous, flat or slightly m-shaped in transverse section or concave, (24-) 29-80 x (4-) 5-8 (-9) mm; apex acute; margin glabrous (usually) or ciliolate; upper surface dark green, without evident stomata, glabrous or hairy along midrib; lower surface with a regular series of short oblique domatia just within margin. light green; petiole 2-5 mm. inflorescences with 21-42 flowers, lateral, almost always unbranched or rarely tripartite (seen only on some inflorescences), (5-) 8-12 cm: peduncle 0.5-3 cm; rachis 5-10.5 cm. Bracts alternate or opposite and decussate below and becoming alternate above, lanceolate or ovate, acute (usually) to obtuse. Flowers hermaphrodite or female (on different plants). Pedicels 2-8 mm. Calyx (2.5-) 3.5-5.8 mm, 4-5-lobed (5th lobe small, posterior); lobes ovate or lanceolate or deltoid, subacute or acute or acuminate, with mixed glandular and eglandular cilia (but often appearing almost exclusively glandular, with eglandular cilia very short and infrequent). Corolla tube glabrous; tube of hermaphrodite flowers 1-2.5 mm (corolla rather unevenly divided such that tube is approximately 1-1.5 mm on posterior side, and approximately 2.5 mm on anterior side), cylindric, shorter than calyx (posterior side considerably shorter, anterior side only just shorter or about equal); lobes white or mauve at anthesis, ovate, acute to obtuse, suberect to recurved (with age), longer than corolla tube. Stamen filaments white or faintly mauve, 4.5-6 mm; anthers purple or mauve or cream, 1.7-2.1 mm. Ovary sometimes hairy (with a few fine, short hairs), approximately 1 mm; ovules 6-9 per locule: style 4.5-7 mm, occasionally sparsely hairy. Capsules acute or subacute, 3.5-5.5 x 3-4 mm, glabrous, loculicidal split extending 1/4-1/2-way to base. Seeds flattened (sometimes strongly), broad ellipsoid-ovoid to discoid, not winged or weakly winged, brown, 1-1.4 (-1.6) x 0.9-1.3 mm, micropylar rim 0.2-0.5 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive species readily distinguished from all others by the presence of two rows of marginal domatia on the undersides of its leaves. It is widely cultivated in New Zealand.

DISTRIBUTION

South Island - northern and western Nelson, and north Westland. It is known from only a few localities, between Mount Burnell in the north and Punakaiki in the South, mostly near the West Coast, with one record from the Graham Valley, Arthur Range.

HABITAT

Scrub on and around calcium-rich rocks.

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica townsonii Cheeseman

SYNONYMS

Veronica macrocarpa var. *crassifolia* Cheeseman, *Hebe townsonii* (Cheeseman) Cockayne et Allan

TAXONOMIC NOTES

V. townsonii was recorded from Mt Messenger, North Island, by Simpson (1945) on the basis of (presumably cultivated) plants reportedly derived from wild collections made by R. O. Green. Although subsequent authors (e.g. Moore, in Allan 1961; Eagle 1982; Heads 1993) have also listed this locality for the species, there are no wild-collected specimens; only cultivated specimens suggest this provenance—for example, CHR 103064, 132134, 132135, 180127, WELT 82176 (and these could possibly be derived from the same stock as those examined by Simpson 1945). Recent and concerted searches of Mount Messenger (Druce 1980; Clarkson & Boase 1982) have failed to find the species there, and the report by R. O. Green remains unsubstantiated.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September-November (-January)

FRUITING

(October-) November-February (-August)

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'.

townsonii: Honours William L. Townson (1855-1926), who provided T. F. Cheeseman with specimens upon which the original description was based.

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

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

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Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora.

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ATTRIBUTION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026