

Wahlenbergia congesta

COMMON NAME

harebell

SYNONYMS

Wahlenbergia congesta (Cheeseman) N.E.Br. subsp. *congesta*,
Wahlenbergia congesta subsp. *haastii* J.A.Petterson, *Wahlenbergia morganii* Petrie, *Wahlenbergia saxicola* var. *congesta* Cheeseman

FAMILY

Campanulaceae

AUTHORITY

Wahlenbergia congesta (Cheeseman) N.E.Brown

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

WAHCON

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (North-west Nelson coastline south to northern Fiordland and also along portions of the northern Foveaux Strait coastline).

HABITAT

Coastal on rocky bluffs, cliff faces, ledges, beaches (cobble and sand), sand dunes and in low turf overlying seepages. Usually found in the most exposed sites where constant wind and salt blast reduces competition from taller plants.



Ferguson Coast. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Green Hills. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Compact, mat-forming, predominantly autogamous perennial herb producing numerous close-set rosulate tufts of glossy glabrous, dark green to yellow-green leaves and subsessile white flowers. **Petiole** 1.5–2 mm, narrow, rather thin. **Leaves** 8–25 mm, dark green, yellow-green or reddish-green, orbicular, spatulate, margins shallowly crenate-serrate, undulate or flat, narrowed to petiole. **Scape** solitary arising from centre of each rosette, 10–20 mm long when flowering, elongating up to 50 mm long in fruit. **Flowers** solitary, terminal, erect, white or faintly tinged blue, 12–15 mm diameter. **Calyx lobes** 2 × 1 mm wide at base, triangular. **Corolla** 9–12 mm long, rotate-campanulate to funnellform, tube bowl-shaped, 4 × 5 mm, lobes 7–8 × 5 mm, ovate, obtuse. **Capsule** 3–6 mm diameter, globular. **Seeds** glossy brown, ellipsoid.

SIMILAR TAXA

None. The coastal habitat, compact, mat forming growth form, and small globose capsule readily distinguish *Wahlenbergia congesta* from the other rosulate New Zealand species of the genus. Petterson (1997) recognised two subspecies (subsp. *congesta* and subsp. *haastii*) within *W. congesta*. Her subsp. *haastii* is said to differ from subsp. *congesta* by having smaller capsules (3 mm cf. up to 6 mm diameter in subsp. *congesta*) and funnellform rather than rotate-campanulate flowers. These are distinctions which on occasion can be seen in other populations that she had treated as subsp. *congesta*. Petterson (1997) also argued that there was an ecological distinction, with subsp. *haastii* growing only on schist sand—however, this geological difference is apparent only because, in the range where subsp. *haastii* happens to grow, the beaches are made up primarily of the local rock type—schist. In cultivation the characters she used are soon lost, suggesting that irrespective of substrate there is no genetic or ecological basis to warrant continued recognition of this subspecies.

FLOWERING

November–February

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, White

FRUITING

December–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces—best kept in a pot and frequently repotted with fresh soil to keep it going. Use free draining soil mixed with plenty of sand. Does not like to dry out too much and does best in a sunny situation.

THREATS

A widespread at times locally common, biologically sparse and somewhat disjunct species. It is possible that some populations particularly those within dune fields are at risk, are declining or have gone extinct but there is as yet no clear evidence for this.

ETYMOLOGY

wahlenbergia: Named in honour of Wahlenberg, a Swedish botanist and author of *A Botany of Lapland*.

congesta: Crowded

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (22 October 2006). Description adapted from Petterson (1997).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Petterson JA. 1997. Revision of the genus *Wahlenbergia* (Campanulaceae) in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 35(1): 9–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1997.10410669>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Wahlenbergia congesta* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/wahlenbergia-congesta/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/wahlenbergia-congesta/>