

Veronica rivalis

COMMON NAMES

Northland River koromiko

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPT, PD

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Shrub bearing long narrow pointed pairs of leaves and spikes of small white flowers inhabiting river banks in Northland. Leaves to 85mm long by 9mm wide, hairy on margin (lens needed), leaf bud without small gap at base. Flower spike to 14cm long. Fruit a dry flattened capsule.

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Spindly, brittle, openly branched 1-1.5 m tall shrub of riverine habitats, favouring sites prone to sudden flooding. Branches erect, rather brittle, brown to grey-brown; branchlets spindly, green, bifariously or occasionally uniformly puberulent, or rarely glabrous; internodes 1.5-29 mm; leaf scars weakly evident or obscure. Leaf bud distinct without sinus. Leaves 15-118 x 3-12 mm, dull dark green to yellow-green, linear to linear-lanceolate, membranous, apex acute to obtuse, margin ciliolate, entire or finely, and distantly denticulate. Inflorescence a lateral, usually unbranched raceme 27-135 mm long, bearing 13-81 flowers; peduncle 5-19 mm; rachis 2-117 mm, longer than or equal to subtending leaves. Bracts alternate, narrowly deltoid or lanceolate, acute, outer surface hairy. Flowers white or tinged pale mauve; pedicels 0.5-5 mm, longer than or equal to bracts, usually recurved in fruit. Calyx 2-3.5 mm; lobes very narrowly deltoid or lanceolate, acute to acuminate, densely to sparsely hairy on the outer surface. Corolla tube 1.3-2.8 x 1.6-01.8 mm, white to pale mauve, shortly funnelform, much shorter than or equal to calyx, internally densely hairy, externally rarely so; lobes white or tinged pale mauve at anthesis, lanceolate, acute, or subacute, suberect to patent, usually longer than corolla tube (sometime shorter), sometimes ciliate and/or hairy on the outer surface. Stamen filaments 4-6.5 mm; anthers 1.9-2.2 mm, mauve. Ovary 0.9-1.2 mm, narrowly ovoid, usually sparsely or minutely hairy; style 3.5-5.5 mm. Capsules 2-3.5 x 1.6-3 mm, pale brown to brown, obtuse or subacute, occasionally sparsely hairy. Seeds 0.9-1.4 x 0.9 -1.1 mm, straw-yellow, strongly flattened, ellipsoid to discoid, weakly winged.



Locally abundant on river gorge edges, Puketi Far North. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 16/01/2020, Licence: CC BY.



Locally abundant on river gorge edges, Puketi Far North. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 16/01/2020, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

Recognised by the rheophytic ecology, linear to linear-lanceolate leaves, absence of a sinus, calyces which are hairy on the outside, and very short corolla tube, which is shorter than or equal to the length of calyx. The corolla lobes are sharply acute. It is perhaps most similar to *Veronica flavida*, *V. angustissima*, *V. ligustrifolia* and *V. stricta*. It differs from all but *V. angustissima* by its rheophytic ecology, spindly shrub habit, and narrow linear, linear-lanceolate leaves. From *V. angustissima* by the corolla tube which is shorter than or equal to the calyces, while in *V. angustissima* it is distinctly longer than the calyx.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, Northland where it is known from both the Kerikeri River and Puketotara Stream (near Kerikeri), Waipapa River (Puketi Forest) and Waipoua River.

HABITAT

A forest dwelling, rheophytic species of stream and river banks that are prone to frequent flooding.

THREATS

A very localised Northland endemic which has its stronghold in the Waipapa River area of Puketi Forest and probably also the Waipoua River. It is close to extinction along the Kerikeri due mainly to the spread of aggressive weeds (many derived from nearby houses). However, aside from the decline known to be happening there it seems secure elsewhere. In fact the exact distribution of this species remains unknown, and it may be even more widespread than currently believed

GENUS

Veronica

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica rivalis Garn.-Jones

SYNONYMS

Veronica acutiflora Benth. nom. illeg., *Veronica ligustrifolia* var. *acutiflora* Hook.f., *Hebe acutiflora* Cockayne

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January - June

FRUITING

January - December

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings and fresh seed. Forms a small bushy shrub that needs frequent pruning to maintain a good shape. Tends to be rather short-lived, and does best in semi-shade with a permanently moist but free draining soil.

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

VERRIV

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, PD, Sp

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: PD

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Bayly, M.; Kellow, A. 2006: An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Te Papa Press, Wellington.

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

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange (12 August 2005): Description adapted from Bayly & Kellow (2006)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026