Veronica strictissima

COMMON NAMES
Banks Peninsula hebe

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Bushy shrub bearing pairs of long narrow leaves and spikes of white flowers inhabiting Banks Peninsula. Leaves to 49mm long by 8mm wide, hardly narrowing to blunt tip, margin hairy (lens needed). Leaf bud with no gap at base. Flower spikes to 11cm long.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

Hebe strictissima. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Bushy shrub to 2.5 m tall. Branches erect, old stems brown or grey; branchlets olive-green or red-brown, minutely puberulent (usually) or glabrous, hairs bifarious; internodes (1-) 2-13 (-18) mm; leaf decurrencies evident to obscure (often with narrow ridges along medial line and margins). Leaf bud distinct; sinus absent. Leaves erecto-patent to patent; lamina linear-lanceolate or narrowly oblong, subcoriaceous, flat or concave, (9-) 16-41 (-49) x 3-7 (-8) mm; apex acute to subacute or shortly apiculate; 2 lateral secondary veins sometimes evident at base of fresh leaves; margin sometimes more or less cartilaginous, usually eglandular puberulent or sometimes glabrous; upper surface green, dull, with many stomata, hairy along midrib or glabrous; lower surface light green. Inflorescences with (11-) 20-72 flowers, lateral, unbranched, 1.7-7.7 (-10.7) cm, almost always longer than or very rarely about equal to subtending leaves; peduncle (0.3-) 0.4-1 (-1.5) cm; rachis 1.2-6.5 (-9.2) cm. Bracts alternate, ovate or deltoid (sometimes narrowly), obtuse (mostly) to acute. Flowers hermaphrodite or female (on different plants). Pedicels 1-4 mm, hairy (indumentum sometimes sparse when compared with that of peduncle and rachis). Calyx 1.5-2 (-2.5) mm; lobes ovate, obtuse. Corolla tube hairy inside; tube of hermaphrodite flowers 1.4-2.9 x 1.3-1.7 mm, funnelform, equalling or slightly longer than calyx; tube of female flowers approximately 1.3-1.8 mm, funnelform, equalling or slightly longer than calyx; lobe, white or tinged deep mauve at anthesis, circular or elliptic (often broadly) or oblong (anterior only), obtuse (posterior sometimes emarginate), suberect to recurved, longer to shorter than corolla tube (posterior lobe always longer than tube, anterior lobe often shorter than tube). Stamen filaments incurved at apex in bud, 3-5 mm; anthers dark magenta or purple, 1.2-1.8 mm; sterile anthers of female flowers purple or light brown. Ovary sometimes hairy, 0.9-1.3 mm; ovules 11-16 per locule, in 1-2 layers; style 2.3-6 mm, sometimes hairy. Capsules subacute or obtuse, 2.9-4 x approximately 2.2-2.6 mm, occasionally hairy, loculicidal split extending up to ¾-way to base. Seeds flattened, more or less broad ellipsoid, not winged to only weakly winged, brown, 1-1.6 x (0.8-) 0.9-1.3 mm, micropylar rim 0.1-0.4 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
Similar to *V. traversii, V. stenophylla* and *V. parviflora*, from which it is distinguished by (among other features) having corolla tubes equal to or only slightly exceeding surrounding calyces. The only other *Veronicas* on Banks Peninsula are *V. salicifolia* and *V. odora*.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic, South Island. Banks Peninsula and the Port Hills.

HABITAT
Grows mostly in open areas on banks and bluffs, or in scrub.

GENUS
Veronica

FAMILY
Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY
Veronica strictissima (Kirk) Garn.-Jones

SYNONYMS
Veronica parviflora var. strictissima Kirk, Veronica leiophylla var. strictissima (Kirk) Cockayne, Hebe leiophylla var. strictissima (Kirk) Cockayne et Allan, Hebe strictissima (Kirk) L.B.Moore

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Moore (in Allan 1961) suggests the species may form hybrids with H. salicifolia, and a specimen potentially matching this parentage is WELT 84066. Aspects of reproductive ecology arc discussed by Delph (1990).

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
December-March (-June)

FRUITING
(January-) March-April (-June)

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'.
strictissima: Very straight and narrow

NVS CODE
VERSTS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 80

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Allan, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer.
Bayly, M.J., Kellow, A.V. 2006. An illustrated guide to New Zealand Hebes. Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa press pg. 176.
Delph, L. F. 1990. Sex ratio variation in the gynodioecious shrub Hebe strictissima Scrophulariaceae).
Evolution. 44: I 34-42.
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-strictissima/

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08 June 2026