

Veronica salicornioides

COMMON NAME

whipcord hebe

SYNONYMS

Hebe salicornioides (Hook.f.) Cockayne et Allan, *Leonohebe salicornioides* (Hook.f.) Heads

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Veronica salicornioides Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RF

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Spreading low growing shrub bearing green erect narrow scaly even twigs inhabiting inland Marlborough. Twigs 1.2-3.8mm wide. Leaves scale-like, smooth, clasping stem along full length, tip rounded, margins finely hairy (lens needed). Flowers white, in groups of 6-8 at tips of twigs.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island only. In the east, from southern Marlborough (upper Wairau and Clarence Rivers including tributaries) to North Canterbury (Lake Tennyson).

HABITAT

A montane to subalpine species occupying an altitudinal range of 750-1,500 m. It is invariably found in mountain valleys, along lake, tarn, river or stream-side catchments, usually within red tussock (*Chionochloa rubra*) dominated wetlands, flushes and seepages.



Hebe salicornioides. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Jacks Pass, Hanmer. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect shrub up to 1 x 1m. Trunk short, stout, covered in grey bark. Branches few, erect, rather flexible. Branchlets terete, 20-80 mm long, 2-2.5(-3) mm diameter, yellow-green, not glossy, softly fleshy, and pliant, very brittle when dead; internodes 3-4 mm long, exposed for most of length; nodal joint obscure. Leaves widely spaced (distant), reduced to scales, < 1mm long, somewhat membranous when fresh, dull green to yellowish green, apex obtuse to rounded, or subacute, occasionally convex and incurved, margin with pale membranous rim pressed very close to the stem, fused for at least ½ of length to form a sheathing collar. Inflorescence a 10-12-flowered spike. Bracts 1.5 mm long, obtuse to truncate. Calyx 2-3 mm, lobes obtuse, usually fused for 2/3 of length, or completely to apex. Corolla tube 2-3 mm, included within calyx, white, truncate. Corolla lobes spreading, 3-5 mm, white or pale lilac, broadly ovate, apex obtuse to subacute. Capsule 4.5-5 x 2-2.5mm, pale brown to brown, rhomboid, rhomboid-ovate, apex subacute or acute.

SIMILAR TAXA

Veronica salicornioides can be confused with *V. armstrongii* and *V. ochracea*. From both species *V. salicornioides* can be distinguished by its preference for montane tussock-dominated flushes, lake, river and stream-sides, erect growth form, and fewer, ascending rather than spreading non-glossy branches, with the branchlet internodes 3 or more mm long. The leaves of *V. salicornioides* are reduced to scales <1 mm long, which are widely spaced on the stem, appressed and never overlapping. The leaves of *V. armstrongii* are bead-like and form bumps along the stem. *Veronica ochracea* has a dense spreading habit, firm glossy branchlets and thick, olive-green leaves.

FLOWERING

November - February

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White

FRUITING

December - May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. Dislikes humidity and does best in a free-draining though permanently moist soil planted in full sun.

THREATS

Formerly threatened by fire. This species now has a widely fragmented distribution. Many populations comprise mature adults with no recruitment evident. Weeds such as *Hieracium*, *Carex scoparia*, and *Agrostis* spp. may be suppressing regeneration at some sites. Plants are browsed by cattle, horses, sheep and goats, and at many sites it is only secure because of the general inaccessibility of the habitat.

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'.

salicornioides: Like *Salicornia* (glasswort)

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

TAXANOMIC NOTES

Hebe salicornioides has also been recorded from western Otago (Humboldt Range), though the record is apparently unsubstantiated by herbarium vouchers. NZPCN follow others who regard this species as endemic to southern Marlborough and North Canterbury.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 October 2006). Description based on Bayly & Kellow (2006).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Bayly, M.J.; Kellow, A.V. 2006: *Hebes, identification, classification and biology*. Wellington, Te Papa Press.
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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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