



Veronica speciosa

Common Name(s):

Napuka, Titirangi

Current Threat Status (2012):

Threatened - Nationally Vulnerable

Distribution:

Endemic. North and South Islands. In the North Island known only from west coast. Formerly from Scots Point to Urenui. In the South Island from several sites in the Marlborough Sounds. Now only known from outer South Head (Hokianga Harbour), Maunganui Bluff, near Muriwai Beach, at two sites on cliffs west of Aotea Harbour, Mokau and at Titirangi Bay (Marlborough sounds). Recently it has been suggested that only the outer South Head, Maunganui Bluff and Muriwai populations are natural, the others resulting from past deliberate cultivation by Maori.

Habitat:

Coastal cliffs and headlands, in low windswept scrub and flaxland. Rarely under taller trees.

Features*:

Spreading to somewhat sprawling shrub up to 2 x 3 m. Branches stout, becoming woody at base, spreading to sprawling, rarely erect, often layering on contact with ground. Branchlets stout, pliant, glabrous, yellow-green to green, internodes variable in length, though much longer than stem diameter. Leaf-bud with distinct sinus, glabrescent. Petiole stout, fleshy 5-20 mm. Leaves numerous, coriaceous, fleshy to almost succulent, glabrescent except of lamina margin, 50-200 x 25-80 mm, dark green, green to yellow-green and glossy above, much paler beneath, broadly elliptic to obovate-oblong or oblong, apex obtuse, often retuse, base obtuse; lamina margin distinctly enlarged, red-pigmented, finely pubescent. Inflorescence a simple, lateral, erect raceme 30-80 x 30-40 mm. Peduncle robust, fleshy, glabrous, 30-50 mm long. Flowers rather fleshy, rather crowded on raceme. Pedicels 2-8 mm, exceeding the bracts. Bracts narrowly subulate, ciliate. Calyx-lobes 2-3 mm long, greenish-yellow to dark green, subacute, ciliate. Corolla-tube and lobes dark magenta or red, 4-5 x 3-5 mm, exceeding calyx, lobes 5-6 mm long, obtuse, ciliate. Capsules stout, robust, 6 x 4 mm, brown to dark brown, broadly ovate, apex acute, coriaceous.

Flowering:

Hebe speciosa may be found in flower throughout the year.

Fruiting:

Fruit is usually present throughout the year.

Threats:

Threatened by weed invasion of its coastal habitat, browsing animals, and genetic pollution through planting of other hebe sp. and cultivars in the vicinity of wild populations. DNA based research has discovered that populations south of West Auckland (Muriwai) stem from deliberate past Maori plantings of this attractive red-flowered species (Armstrong & de Lange 2005). These plantings resulted from the movement of a limited amount of material from South Head, Hokianga, and as such these southerly populations lack sufficient genetic variability to sexually maintain themselves.

*Attribution:

Fact sheet by Peter J. de Lange 1 October 2006. Description based on Bayly & Kellow (2006).

References and further reading:

Armstrong, T.T.J.; de Lange, P.J. 2005: Conservation genetics of *Hebe speciosa* (Plantaginaceae) and endangered New Zealand shrub. *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 149: 229-239.

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

Bodley, F.A. 1961. *Hebe speciosa* in the Marlborough Sounds. *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin*, 32: 9

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

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=66



Caption: *Hebe speciosa*

Photographer: Wayne Bennett



Caption: Flower of *Hebe speciosa*

Photographer: Wayne Bennett