Spring flowering
Veronica / Speedwells

By Paul Green
I’m including all Veronica / Speedwells that flower during March & April.

There are specimens of all on the table for you to look at.
A few years ago it was decided Hebe should become Veronica.

Veronica x franciscana
(Hedge Veronica)

Flowers all year round
Hedge Veronica is a garden shrub that has become well established on coastal sea-cliffs and on coastal walls.

Can be an invasive species.

All the maps used in this talk were downloaded from the BSBI DDb.
ID books will ask in the key does your shrub Veronica have a leaf-bud sinus.

A sinus is a stalk.

There are many other shrub Veronica, very few are established in the wild.
Onto the real Veronica / Speedwells

Starting with the overwintering annuals.

The leaves appearing in the autumn and flower in the spring.
Ivy-leaved Speedwell is common over much of Ireland. Often found on road banks and waste ground. Also along wooded river banks.

There are two subspecies.
As you can see the subspecies are not recorded very well
Veronica hederifolia subsp. hederifolia (Ivy-leaved Speedwell)

Petals dark blue. Anthers dark blue.
Veronica hederifolia subsp. hederifolia (Ivy-leaved Speedwell)

No hairs on face of calyx

Flower stalk has a single line of hairs.
Veronica hederifolia subsp. lucorum (Ivy-leaved Speedwell)

Petals a whitish pale blue.

Anthers whitish, with a hint of blue.
Veronica hederifolia subsp. lucorum (Ivy-leaved Speedwell)

Flower stem with hairs scattered all around.

A few hairs on face of calyx.
Left: Subsp. lucorum has pale green leaves

Right: Subsp. hederifolia has darker green leaves
Veronica crista-galli (Crested Field-speedwell)

Has very tiny dark blue flowers.

Only Speedwell with 2 opposite calyx rather than 4 as in all other species

The calyx has two points at the top

Non-native
Very common along road verges and banks in Cos Cork and Waterford where it can be the dominant species. Known from Cork City since 1904. Flowers February through to May.
Veronica polita (Grey Field-speedwell)

Petals dark blue. Leaves a dirty green

Hairs on capsule – some with sticky glands, some without. Flower stalk shorter than leaf
Veronica polita (Grey Field-speedwell)

A weed of gardens & cultivated ground, on disturbed ground, on road verges, on gravel paths. Often seen on graves of churchyards and cemeteries.

Said to be declining – this statement doesn’t seem true for Wexford.

Flowers all year round.
Veronica agrestis (Green Field-speedwell)

All hairs on capsules with sticky glands

Whole plant green. Flower stalk shorter than leaf.

All books give flowers blue as in Zoe’s photo. Nearly all Green Field-speedwells I have seen in Ireland have pure white flowers.
Veronica agrestis (Green Field-speedwell)

Scattered over Ireland, never common.

A weed of cultivation and gardens, on gravel paths, on disturbed ground and rocky outcrops.

Flowers all year round.

Have seen on rocky outcrops by Clondagoff Castle, Co. Galway and St John's Point, Co. Donegal.
Veronica persica (Common Field-speedwell)

Hairs on capsule without any sticky glands.

Flower stalk much longer than leaf.

Flowers all year round.
Veronica persica (Common Field-speedwell)

First recorded from Ireland in Cork around 1845.

Now very common in manmade habitats.
Veronica arvensis (Wall Speedwell)

Flowers dark blue, very small.

Leaves more or less stalk-less
Veronica arvensis (Wall Speedwell)

Common over most of Ireland. Usually in manmade habitats.

Has just started flowering. In the milder parts of the country it will flower all year round.
Perennial Veronica / Speedwell
Every green all year round
Veronica filiformis (Slender Speedwell)

Leaves round and kidney shaped.

Flower stalk very long compared with leaves.
Veronica filiformis (Slender Speedwell)

A mat forming plant. Often seen on lawns and mown verges.

Also on native habitats such as river banks.

Does not set seed in Ireland. Spreads by broken of pieces taking root.

First found in Ireland at Ballina, Co. Mayo in 1933.

Has just started flowering.
**Veronica chamaedrys (Germander Speedwell)**

Flowers are on a spike.

Leaf stalk about 5mm long

Hairs on stem in two rows
Veronica chamaedrys (Germander Speedwell)

Common native over the whole of Ireland.

Grows in a wide range of native habitats from ditch banks and open woods.

Has just started flowering.
Veronica montana (Wood Speedwell)

Flowers on a spike.

Hairs all round stem. Leaves lime green. Leaf stalk 10mm

Zoe Devlin
Veronica montana (Wood Speedwell)

Common native in wooded areas and along wooded rivers. Also sometimes in hedgerows.
Veronica serpyllifolia (Thyme-leaved Speedwell)

Forms a small clump

Flowers on a spike. Petals blue or white

Leaves shiny. No teeth or lobes on leaf margin.

All 3 photos: Zoe Devlin
Veronica serpyllifolia (Thyme-leaved Speedwell)

A very common native species. Often found in field gateways.

Has just started flowering
I would like to thank Zoe Devlin for the use of the photos. These can be seen in more detail on Zoe’s website:

Wild Flowers of Ireland.

http://www.wildflowersofireland.net

Thankyou for listening.