Acaena caesiiglauca

COMMON NAMES
glaucus bidibid, piripiri

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
An evergreen hairy silvery-blue herb, which spreads up to a 1 metre across and about 10cm in height. The pinnate leaves are delicate and toothed, and may have a pinkish, contrasting coloured margin. The globe shaped flower balls are white and grow into a cluster of hooked spikes, which when ripe brown off, become firm and may stick to your socks or laces when brushed past in order to disperse.

Mavora Lakes, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Acaena caesiiglauca. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Stoloniferous, prostrate, trailing perennial herb, forming a loose mat up to 1 metre in diameter. **Stems** less than 2 mm diameter, hairy, up to 30 cm long, and/or 10 cm high, rooting at nodes; **Stipules** perfect to bifid; **Leaves** odd-pinnate, between 20-100 mm long with 7-9(-11) leaflets; **Leaflets** ovate with narrowing base, serrated toothed margin, teeth are hair-tipped, lower 1/3 untoothed, lower leaflets much smaller, distinctly bluish green on upper surface often with pink-purple-light brown coloured teeth, upper surface flat, almost hairless to very hairy, lower surface very hairy; **Inflorescence scape** up to 200 mm, very hairy; **Capitulum** of 50-70 florets, each floret has 4 sepals, 2 stamen, white anthers, 1 style, 1 achene; **Fruit** roughly cone-shaped, each having 4 barb-tipped spines, up to 7 mm long, which mature dry, pale brown when ripe, enabling attachment to passing hairy/feathered surfaces as vector, and/or to aid wind dispersal.

SIMILAR TAXA
Acaena fissistipula, another bluish-green species, stipules are 3-5-fid rather than perfect or bifid; leaflet teeth are rounded rather than sharply pointed; flower stems are almost hairless compared to hairy; anthers are red rather than white.
Acaena tesca, also glaucous in colour, rhizomatous rather than stoloniferous; capitulum lacking scape, rather than up to 200mm; spines of fruit up to 20 mm long rather than up to 7.5 mm, and red; confined to central Otago.
Acaena inermis, glaucous or dull purple-brown in colour, rhizomatous rather than stoloniferous; stipules entire only; up to 15 leaflets; leaflet teeth are rounded rather than sharply pointed, lack hairy tip; scape up to 75 mm, rather than up to 200 mm; only 20 florets at most per capitulum; fruit spikes red, lacking barbs or hairs.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. **Te Waipounamu | South Island**, East of main divide.

HABITAT
Montane to alpine (600-1500 m.a.s.l.), tussock grassland and scree margins.

THREATS
Declining in Otago the National Stronghold for this species.

GENUS
Acaena

FAMILY
Rosaceae

AUTHORITY
Acaena caesiiglauca (Bitter) Bergmans

SYNONYMS
Acaena caesiiglauca var. pilosa (Kirk) Allan, Acaena sanguisorbae var. pilosa Kirk, Acaena sanguisorbae subsp. caesiiglauca Bitter

TAXONOMIC NOTES
In Allan (1961) and Mark (2012) a 'var. *pillosa*' is mentioned which is said to differ by having more numerous leaflets, 11-13, which are equally hairy above and below, this is suggested as a synonym in Webb *et. al.* (1988), as no type specimen was found.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November - January.

FRUITING
December - May.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Spiny hypanthia are dispersed by attaching to fur, feathers and clothing and possibly also dispersed by wind and granivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

CULTIVATION
Often found as a decorative planting specimen in commercial nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY
acaena: From the Greek 'akanthos' thorn, referring to the spiny calyx that many species have
caesiiglauca: From the Latin caesius 'lavender blue' and the Greek glaukos 'sea green'

NVS CODE
ACACAE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NStr Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Volume 1. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. pg. 360.
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Lloyd K. 2001. A Key and notes for *Acaena* (Rosaceae) in New Zealand. *Botanical Society of Otago Newsletter 25*. Pgs.10-14.
Mark AF. 2012. Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg.113.
Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ. 1988. Flora of New Zealand, Volume IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Botany Division, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Christchurch, NZ. Pg. 1059.
Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (August 29th 2025). Description adapted from Mark (2012), Lloyd (2001), Webb *et. al.* (1988), Allan (1961).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/acaena-caesiiglauca/

PDF DATE

03 June 2026