Acaena dumicola

COMMON NAMES
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 pale blue-green or dull green herb, which spreads up to almost a metre across and about 5 cm in height. The odd-pinnate leaves are delicate and toothed, and may have a bronze, 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.

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Stoloniferous, prostrate, trailing perennial herb, forming a loose mat up to 0.8 metre in diameter depending on constraints of habitat. **Stems** 1 mm diameter, sparsely hairy, up to 30 cm long, and/or 5 cm high, rooting at nodes; **Stipules** entire to pentafid; **Leaves** odd-pinnate, between 15-70 mm long with 7-11 leaflets; **Leaflets** profoundly reduced below 3 distal obovate-orbicular leaflets, lower leaflets almost wedge-shaped, sharply serrated toothed margin, 11-15 teeth per leaflet not hair-tipped, dull green to bluish-green green on both surfaces, teeth sharply pointed discoloured to bronze, upper surface flat sparsely hairy, lower surface moderately hairy; **Inflorescence scape** up to 100 mm, hairy; **Capitulum** of about 40 florets, each floret has 4 sepals, 2 stamen, white anthers, 1 white style, 1 achene; **Fruit** roughly cone-shaped, each having 4 barb-tipped spines, up to 4 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 emittens, is quite a similar species, distribution does mean that neither grow together as *A. emittens* is only found in the North Island, and *A. dumicola* is only found in the South Island. The differences include *A. emittens* being more pale green than blue-green in colour, and the leaflets being hairless on the upper surface. The leaflet teeth are also less abundant 7-9 (compared to 11-15) and are blunt compared to sharp.
Acaena fissistipula, is very similar in appearance at first glance. The differences between the two species are that the leaflets of this species reduce evenly from distal to proximal, compared to the 3 distal leaflets of *A. dumicola* being orbicular and those below being dramatically reduced in size and shape; the anthers of *A. fissistipula* are red/maroon compared to white in *A. dumicola*. The scape is 12-20 cm in *A. fissistipula* compared to up to 10 cm in *A. dumicola*.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Eastern **South Island**. Awatere Valley to Eyre Mountains.

HABITAT
Montane to low alpine (300-1200 m.a.s.l.), shady sites (beneath shrubs, beside rocks) in grasslands.

GENUS
Acaena

FAMILY
Rosaceae

AUTHORITY
Acaena dumicola B.H.Macmill.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November-December

FRUITING
(December-)January-February

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).

ETYMOLOGY
acaena: From the Greek 'akanthos' thorn, referring to the spiny calyx that many species have
dumicola: In thickets or shrubs

NVS CODE
ACADUM

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 At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NStr, Sp 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
Lloyd K. 2001. A Key and notes for *Acaena* (Rosaceae) in New Zealand. *Botanical Society of Otago Newsletter 25*. Pgs.10-14.
Macmillan BH. 1985 *Acaena dumicola* (Rosaceae)— a new species from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany, 23(2)*: pp. 337-340.
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.
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. Pp. 1055, 1059-1060.

ATTRIBUTION

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

Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026