

Acaena glabra

COMMON NAMES

bidibid, piripiri

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

An evergreen shiny bright green herb, which grows in clumps up to a 1/2 metre across and about 15cm in height. The pinnate leaves are delicate and blunt-toothed, and may have a reddish, contrasting coloured margin. The globe shaped flower balls are white in bloom and grow into a cluster lacking noticeable spikes, which when ripening become orangish/red, then brown off.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Woody rootstock not more than 10 mm diameter, spreading or upright or both, trailing perennial herb, forming a tight clump up to 50 cm in diameter. **Stems** 1-3 mm diameter, hairy, 5-15 cm long, and/or 5-15 cm high, rooting at nodes; **Stipules** entire, trifid, quadrifid or occasionally pentafid; **Leaves** odd-pinnate, between 20-70 mm long with 9-13 leaflets; **Leaflets** ovate with narrowing base, 4-6 × 6-9 mm channelled, deeply serrated blunt-toothed margin, 7-9 teeth per leaflet often red not hair-tipped, lower leaflets smaller, upper surface bright green and shiny, lower surface dull light green; **Inflorescence scape** 30-90 mm, glabrous; **Capitulum** of more than 100 florets, each floret has 4 sepals, 2 stamen, white (occasionally red) anthers, 1 white style, 1 achene; **Fruit** roughly wedge-shaped, each having 2 barbless spines enclosed in hypanthium wings, occasionally protruding up to 2 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Acaena anserinifolia, a widespread stoloniferous rather than rootstock species that may be similar at a vegetative stage, only when no seed heads are present as they are markedly different. Leaflets are hair tipped and underside very hairy, covered in silvery hairs which give this species a more grey-green appearance rather than bright green as seen in *A. glabra*.

Acaena novae-zelandiae, a widespread stoloniferous species rather than rootstock that may be similar at a vegetative stage, only when no seed heads are present as they are markedly different. Leaflets are shiny and bright green and mostly glabrous have up to 15 teeth per leaflet compared to up to 9 in *A. glabra*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Eastern **South Island**, Marlborough to North Otago.



Berts Stream, Tarndale, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



St Mary's Range. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT

Montane to alpine (600-1750 m.a.s.l.), shingle and scree margins.

GENUS

Acaena

FAMILY

Rosaceae

AUTHORITY

Acaena glabra Buchanan

TAXONOMIC NOTES

In Webb *et. al.* (1988) it is recorded that a single specimen collected in the Ida Valley had red anthers rather than the standard white.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

December-January

FRUITING

January- March

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Spiny hypanthia are dispersed by wind (Thorsen *et al.*, 2009)

ETYMOLOGY

acaena: From the Greek 'akanthos' thorn, referring to the spiny calyx that many species have

glabra: Hairless

NVS CODE

ACAGLA

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: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, NS, 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.
- Mark AF. 2012. Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg. 112.
- 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. Pg. 1060.

ATTRIBUTION

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

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/acaena-glabra/>

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