

Acaena juvenca

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 mildly hairy green herb, which spreads up to a 1 metre across and up to 10 cm in height. The pinnate leaves are delicate and sharp toothed and may have a pinkish or light brown contrasting coloured margin. The globe shaped flower balls are white and pale green 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

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stoloniferous, prostrate, trailing perennial herb, forming a loose mat up to 1 metre in diameter. **Stems** less than 1.5 mm diameter, sparsely to densely covered with bristle-like hairs, up to 30 cm long, and/or 10 cm high; **Stipules** entire or bifid, deeply incised; **Leaves** odd-pinnate, between 17-50 mm long with 3-11 leaflets; **Leaflets** profoundly reduced below 3(-5) distal obovate-orbicular leaflets, serrated toothed margin, teeth sharp often light-brown or pale pink, 8-14 hair-tipped teeth per leaflet, upper surface flat vivid green veins obvious, lower surface pale green hair covered; **Inflorescence scape** 40-150 mm, pale brown stem rather hairy; **Capitulum** of 45-60 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 4-6 mm long, mature dry, pale brown when ripe, enabling attachment to passing hairy/feathered surfaces as vector.

SIMILAR TAXA

Acaena anserinifolia, is a similar colour and could be mistaken, however the stipules are generally more divided 3-8-fid, rather entire or bifid as in *A. juvenca*. *A. anserinifolia* leaflet veins are indistinct on upper surface of leaflets and have more leaflet pairs present 4-6 rather than 3-5 in *A. juvenca*.

Acaena emittens is a very similar plant, with just a few differences, the leaflets have shallow rounded teeth compared to the sharp teeth of *A. juvenca*. *A. emittens* leaflet veins are indistinct on upper surface of leaflets.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 10/11/2003, Licence: CC BY.



Acaena juvenca growing on Mount Iron, Wanaka. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. **North Island:** southern Kaimanawa Mountains, Rangitikei, Hautapu, and Moawhango Valleys, northern Ruahine Range, inland Hawke’s Bay, Wairarapa district, and Pukerua Bay; **South Island:** Nelson, Marlborough, east of the main divide in Canterbury, Otago, and Southland; **Stewart Island/Rakiura**

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (0-1200 m.a.s.l.), open forest, forest margins, shrublands and grasslands.

GENUS

Acaena

FAMILY

Rosaceae

AUTHORITY

Acaena juvenca B.H.Macmill.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(October-)November-February

FRUITING

January-April

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
juvenca: From the Latin word ‘iuvenca’ meaning young cow or heifer, which refers to the appearance of the mature form of this plant resembling the juvenile form of its close relative A. anserinifolia.

NVS CODE

ACAJUV

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: TL 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. 1989. *Acaena juvenca* and *Acaena emittens* (Rosaceae) — two new species from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 27(1): 109-117. DOI:10.1080/0028825X.1989.10410149
- 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 28th 2025) Description adapted from Lloyd (2001), NZ Flora (2025).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026