

Acaena minor var. antarctica

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

An evergreen hairy silvery bluish-green herb, which spreads up to a 1 metre across and about 15 cm in height. The pinnate leaves are delicate and toothed with hairy tips and may be folded upwards lengthways. 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. Only found on Sub-Antarctic Islands.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stoloniferous, prostrate, trailing perennial herb, primary stems 2-3.5 mm diameter, forming a loose mat up to 1 metre in diameter. **Stems** 1-2 mm diameter, hairy, up to 50 cm long, and/or 5-15 cm high, rooting at nodes; **Stipules** entire to trifid. **Leaves** odd-pinnate, more than 50 mm long with 7-15 leaflets; **Leaflets** folded length wise, longer than wide rounded at each end, bluish green on both surfaces, serrated toothed margin, 11-15 teeth are hair-tipped, upper surface hairless, lower surface sparsely hairy along primary and secondary veins. **Inflorescence scape** up to 60-70 mm, densely silky-hair covered. **Capitulum** 7-9 mm diameter of 100-130 florets, each floret has 4 sepals, 2 stamen, dark red anthers, 1 white style, 1 achene; **Fruit** roughly cone-shaped, each having 4 barb-tipped red or yellow spines, 6-12 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

Easily confused with *Acaena minor* var. *minor*, which is generally a smaller plant in all components apart from the size of the capitulum which is 9-14 mm compared to 7-9 mm in *A. minor* var. *antarctica*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Antipodes, Auckland Islands, Motu Ihupuku | Campbell and Macquarie Islands

HABITAT

Coastal to mid-altitude slopes (approximately 0-200 m.a.s.l.), and bird colonies.

GENUS

Acaena

FAMILY

Rosaceae



Macquarie Island. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 20/03/2016, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Macquarie Island. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 20/03/2016, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Acaena minor var. *antarctica* (Cockayne) Allan

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Macquarie Island plants may not be var. *antarctica* and need critical comparison.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November-January

FRUITING

January-March

ETYMOLOGY

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

minor: Smaller

antarctica: Antarctic

NVS CODE

ACAMVA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, SO?

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Volume 1. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledons. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. pg. 363.

Lloyd K. 2001. A Key and notes for *Acaena* (Rosaceae) in New Zealand. *Botanical Society of Otago Newsletter* 25. Pgs. 10-14.

Meurk CD. 1975. Contributions to the flora and plant ecology of Campbell Island. *New Zealand journal of botany*, 13(4), 721-742. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1975.10430355>

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (November 18th 2025). Description adapted from Lloyd (2001), Meurk (1975), Allan (1961).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/acaena-minor-var-antarctica/>

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