

Acaena florida

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DPT, OL

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

An evergreen dull green or olive or violet herb, which spreads up to ½ a metre across and about 15 mm in height, intermingled with other low growing herbs. Found only in the north-west Ruahine Range as a specialist in damp hollows, grassland and limestone ravines. The pinnate leaves are sharply toothed and hairless above, with fine hairs along the obvious veins below. The globe shaped flower balls are white, then grow into a sparse low-lying cluster of spines which are both barb-less and hairless, when ripe they brown off, become firm and may catch the wind to disperse.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stoloniferous, prostrate, perennial herb, forming dense patches.

Prostrate stems c.70–250 mm long, rooting at nodes, erect stems 3–15 × 0.7 mm, brown, sparsely hairy. **Leaves** imparipinnate, 1–2(–5) × 5–12 mm.

Stipules 2–4 mm long, margins and tips hairy, free portion 1 mm long, entire or bifid, acuminate, **Leaflets** 4–5, reducing in size toward base, suborbicular, 2–7 × 2–5 mm, truncate at apex; upper surface dull, pale olive, apple green or pinkish-purple, glabrous, veins distinct; lower surface paler, subglaucous; veins with appressed hairs; teeth 7–11, brown.

Scapes 6–15 mm long at flowering, on short shoots hidden in foliage, densely hairy, scape bract 0 or 1, leaf-like. **Capitulum** 4–5 mm diam., 10 mm diam (including spines) at fruiting; florets c.10–12; sepals 4, stamens 2; styles 2; both white. **Fruit** 1.5 × 1.5 mm. Achenes 2, enclosed within turbinate, red-brown, 4-ribbed, hypanthium. **Spines** 0 or 1, 1–10(–15) mm long, pale red, tapered to naked tip.

SIMILAR TAXA

Acaena microphylla Hook.f. is rather similar. This species has rich-green to greenish brown mottled foliage with shining cuticles, and scapes up to 250 mm long, which hold the capitula well above the foliage. As far as is known *A. microphylla* is not present in the North West Ruahine area.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island. North West Ruahine Range, where it is only known from ravines draining the Mangaohane Plateau and from the nearby Makirikiri Tarns.

HABITAT

Damp hollows within tussock grassland, and associated limestone ravines.

THREATS

Weed invasion by *Pilosella* spp., *Agrostis* spp. and hybridisation with *Acaena anserinifolia*.



Fruiting in Research gardens, Botany Department. Photographer: Kelvin Lloyd, Licence: All rights reserved.



Makirikiri Tarns, Jan 1993. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.

GENUS

Acaena

FAMILY

Rosaceae

AUTHORITY

Acaena rorida B.H.Macmill.

SYNONYMS

Acaena microphylla var. microphylla Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Although exact flowering times are not known, plants have been seen in flower in April.

FRUITING

Although exact fruiting times are unknown plants have been seen in fruit in April.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown by division. This species rarely flowers in cultivation (at least within the North Island—although it has been reported that the species flowers each year in Dunedin) and it would seem that no one has yet tried to germinate seed.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for February 2011](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

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

rorida: From the Latin meaning dewy, wet with dew

NVS CODE

ACAROR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: OL

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: OL

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: OL

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Macmillan BH. 1991. *Acaena rorida* and *Acaena tesca* (Rosaceae) — two new species from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 29: 131–138.
- 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 P.J. de Lange 1 October 2003. Description adapted from MacMillan (1991).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026