

# Aciphylla ferox

## COMMON NAME

fierce speargrass, taramea

## FAMILY

Apiaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Aciphylla ferox* W.R.B.Oliv.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## NVS CODE

ACIFER

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, Nelson through Marlborough to North Canterbury.

## HABITAT

Low Alpine (600-1400 m.a.s.l.), often prominent in subalpine scrub, mixed snow tussock-scrub, grassland and herbfield.



Mt Patriarch, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

## FEATURES

A massive bright green plant growing up to 1 m tall, as single clumps or in small groups. **Leaves** sublabellately pinnate, 2-4 pairs, up to approximately 40 cm long. Sheaths thick, coriaceous, about 70 x 30 mm, tapering to about 20 mm. **Stipules** rigid, approximately 150 x 40 mm, tapering to rigid pungent tips. **Petioles** slightly concavo-convex, striate, approximately 100-150 x 15 mm, tapering to about 10 mm; margins cartilaginous, smooth. Lowest internodes up to approximately 30 mm long. **Primary pinnae** straight or nearly so, erect, lowest approximately 150 x 10-15 mm, with base about 7 mm wide, expanding to greatest width at the middle, then tapering to pungent point; midrib usually rather obscure, margins serrulate-crenulate. **Flowering stems** very stout, grooved; male plants with inflorescence approximately 75 cm long; **bracts** verticillate, lower whorl empty, about 150 mm distant from next whorl. Sheath submembranous, ribbed, approximately 90 x 10 mm, gradually tapering to about 6 mm. **Stipules** unequal, stiff, up to approximately 70 x 2 mm, pungent; central leaflet up to approximately 200 x 4 mm. Upper bracts rigid; sheaths very coriaceous, approximately 30 x 5 mm; stipules usually absent; leaflet rigid, approximately 50 x 3 mm, midrib evident. **Umbels** numerous, on stout striate peduncles up to approximately 80-100 x 2-3 mm, bearing at intervals small umbels; main umbels on stiff rays up to approximately 30 mm long, with narrow lanceolate involucral bracts about 5 mm long. Umbellules on spreading rays up to 10 mm long, about 5 mm diameter. **Fruit** approximately 4 mm long.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Aciphylla horrida* the leaves have a short stout petiole dividing near the base of the leaf, in *A. ferox* the petiole is long (100-150 mm), so only the upper half of the leaf is divided.

Also see taxonomic notes below.

## FLOWERING

November – January (-February)

## FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

## FRUITING

January – March

## LIFE CYCLE

Winged schizocarps are dispersed primarily by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## ETYMOLOGY

**aciphylla**: From the Latin *acicula* 'needle' and the Greek *phyllum* 'leaf', meaning needle-leaf.

**ferox**: From the Latin *ferox* 'fierce', usually referring to very spiny plants

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Dawson & LeComte suggest this species is part of the group with milky juice. They note it may also be seen to hybridise; *A. ferox* x *A. anomala* seen in north-west Nelson and reported by J. W. Dawson.

An entity known as *Aciphylla* "Lomondi" is also similar to this species, "it is found in the dryer eastern areas (Livingstone Mts, Eyre Mts, Wakatipu Basin). It can be difficult distinguishing it from *A. aurea* where the two species meet. Generally, the leaf segments are wider and often but not always glaucous (Lyttle, pers. comm. 2021)".

## ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961) and Mark (2012).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. pg. 485-486.

Dawson, J.W. LeComte, J.R. 1978. Research on *Aciphylla* - a progress report. *Tuatara* 23: pg. 49-67.

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<https://inaturalist.nz/observations/68189913>

Mark, A. F. 2012. Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg. 138, 140.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora.

*Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

## MORE INFORMATION

