

# Aciphylla horrida

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)


## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A massive bright green plant growing up to 1 m tall, as single clumps or in small groups. **Leaves** pinnate 2-3 pairs, up to approximately 80 cm long; sheaths thick and coriaceous, approximately 50 mm wide at base, narrowing to 30 mm; stipules simple, about (100)-150-(250) mm long, pungent. **Petioles** thick, coriaceous, ribbed; margins cartilaginous, serrulate; internodes short. **Primary pinnae** up to approximately 40 cm x 2-(3) cm, very coriaceous, finely striate, midrib obscure, usually strongly curved, lanceolate, margins serrulate, apex pungent. **Flowering stems** approximately 150 cm tall, stout, strongly grooved, flowering through most of their length, inflorescence broad. **Bracts** numerous, the lower empty, or with ill-developed umbels. **Bract-sheath** approximately 55 x 35 mm; stipules up to 75 x 7 mm, distinctly ribbed; lamina simple, lanceolate, up to approximately 185 x 15 mm, narrowing from widest part about  **Umbels** roughly equal to bract-sheaths; rays numerous, up to 30 mm long. Umbellules of male plants on long slender rays, of females on shorter rays. Involucral bracts lanceolate. **Fruit** approximately 4 mm long, mericarps with 2 or 3 broad wings.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Aciphylla ferox* the leaves have a long (100-150 mm) petiole with only upper half of the leaf being divided, in *A. horrida* the leaf almost divides from base.

Also see taxonomic notes below.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, from Mount Uriah south, in higher rainfall areas favouring the western side of Southern Alps, more common towards the south.

## HABITAT

Sub-alpine to Low-alpine (600-1400 m.a.s.l.) often common in mixed snow tussock-scrub and snow tussock-herbfield.

## GENUS

Aciphylla

## FAMILY

Apiaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Aciphylla horrida* W.R.B.Oliv.



Hollyford Valley, December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Dingleburn. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Dawson & LeComte suggest this species is part of the group with milky juice. They note it is also seen to hybridise; *A. horrida* x *A. similis* Temple Basin, = *A. latibracteata* (therefore dismissing this species level recognition) 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)".

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

November - January

## FRUITING

December - February

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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.

**horrida**: Prickly or bristly

## NVS CODE

ACIHOR

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## 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, 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

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

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

Lyttle, D. 2021. Personal communication on InaturalistNZ January 17th, 2021.

<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.

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

### **ATTRIBUTION**

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

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### **MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/aciphylla-horrida/>

### **PDF DATE**

27 May 2026