

Aciphylla latipinna

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Stout blue-green spear grass of montane and subalpine elevations with broad leaf rachises, and stout conical inflorescences up to 1.6 m tall with the flower bracts not whorled.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Plant diameter c. 750–2000 mm, rosette diameter c. 750–1060 mm, number of rosettes per plant 1–8. Roots contractile, only the top of sheath visible at soil level. Leaf sheaths distally 33–60 mm wide, to at least 230 mm long. Leaves coriaceous, obo-rhomboid, length (excluding sheath) 450–850 mm, width 100–250 mm, drying dark or medium green-brown but when fresh, usually medium or light green, rarely medium yellow-green, occasionally with yellowish fine horizontal lines of sclerenchyma, often glaucous, especially younger leaves, and then light (rarely medium) blue-green or light green-blue, sometimes mottled because of patchy glaucousness or darker flecks; margins yellow or yellow-orange, tuberculate; midveins and sclerenchyma yellowish but obscure; sap milky; 1-pinnate, leaflet pairs often 2, occasionally 3. Leaflets apex pungent; margin tuberculate; longest 290–520 mm long; maximum width of distal leaflets (14–)18–34 mm (dried); rachis-leaflet junction planar. Rachis total length 135–400 mm, proximal section length 75–240 mm, proximal section width (19–)25–56 mm (dried). Sheath leaflets undivided, triangular to linear, length 2–100(–130) mm, width 2–8 mm. Inflorescence a conical spike. Male inflorescences per plant 1–2, length c. 1.2–1.6 m; peduncle width c. 50 mm, main axis light yellow through pink to brown-red. Proximal flowering bract length (including sheath) 200–340 mm, with no lateral segments additional to sheath segments; sheath segments 8–27(–40) mm long, spine-like, often narrower than central segment at their junction with sheath of bract. Panicle axes light yellow to brown-red; longest 85–220 mm long; number of distal umbels in longest panicle 40–95. Male flower receptacle diameter c. 1 mm; dark brown, dark purplered, or black. Fl. Nov–Feb. Petals white to light yellow. Female inflorescences per plant 1–4, c. 1–2.4 m tall; peduncle width 38–65 mm, main axis light yellow or light orange to brown-red or dark purple-red. Proximal flowering bract length (including sheath) 112–280 mm, with no lateral segments additional to sheath segments; sheath segments 10–25 mm long, spine-like, often narrower than central segment at their junction with sheath of bract. Panicle axes medium yellow or red-pink to brown-red or dark purple-red; longest (including axes and flowers/fruits) 80–175 mm long; number of distal umbels in longest panicle 8–30. Female flower length 1.5–3 mm, receptacle diameter c. 1 mm, ovary outer wall dark green-brown to dark purple-red. Petals fugacious, white to light yellow. Schizocarps 5–6 mm long, 2–3 mm wide, medium yellow-brown to brown-red or dark purple-red. Flowering Nov–Feb. Fruiting Dec–Mar(–Apr).

SIMILAR TAXA

Recognised by the broad leaf rachises (proximal section usually 25–56 mm wide in dried material) and leaflets (usually 18–34 mm wide in dried material); often glaucous leaflets, and short sheath leaflets. *Aciphylla latipinna* is likely to be confused only with *A. aurea* and *A. horrida*. *Aciphylla aurea* has rachises that are less than or equal to 25 mm and leaflets that are less than or equal to 18 mm, and *A. horrida* rachises that are less than or equal to 30 mm and leaflets that are less than or equal to 18 mm. *Aciphylla latipinna* has shorter sheath leaflets (usually 2–100 mm long) than *A. aurea* (100–435 mm in central and southern populations) and *A. horrida* (usually 65–305 mm). All three species occur sympatrically and Perrie et al. (2026) noted hybridisation between that species and *A. aurea*, especially in disturbed sites such as along roadsides.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island, mostly in western Otago (with some populations in south Westland, south Canterbury and Southland)

HABITAT

Aciphylla latipinna usually occurs in montane and subalpine elevations (800–1530 m a.s.l.) in tussocklands and shrublands, especially on hill slopes but also on ridges and in gullies, on or near rock outcrops, talus, and scree.



GENUS

Aciphylla

FAMILY

Apiaceae

AUTHORITY

Aciphylla latipinna Perrie, Glenny, L.D.Sheph.,

SYNONYMS

None - first described in 2026

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November - February

FRUITING

December - April

ETYMOLOGY

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Perrie, L.R.; Glenny, D.; Shepherd, L.D. 2026: Aciphylla latipinna, a new species of large taramea, speargrass (Aciphyllaeae, Apiaceae) from the southern South Island of New Zealand. New Zealand Journal of Botany 64: e70122 <https://doi.org/10.1002/nzb2.70122>

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 15 July 2026. Description from Perrie et al. (2026).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

15 July 2026