Aciphylla lecomtei

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Brown

Remarkable Range (January). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Hector Mountains. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rosettes up to 350 mm diameter in groups of 25 or more. **Leaves** coriaceous, yellowish-green, up to 250 mm long, 1-pinnate, usually with 4 pairs of leaflets, these more or less plane; sheath up to 90 × 6–12 mm, sheath joint obscure; stipules 35 × 1–1.5 mm, simple; petiole up to 45 × 3–54 mm, more or less convex above, margins rounded, pulvinus evident, 8–10 mm long; lamina obtriangular in outline, lowermost leafleft up to 100 × 3–4 mm, apex acute with a spine 1 mm long, margins finely tuberculate, mid- and margin ribs 0.2 mm wides vein not raised. **Inflorescences** broad. **Female inflorescence** up to 520 mm or more long, stem 300 × 10 mm, pale yellow to brown; head 125 × 90 mm, more or less ovate in outline; compound umbels 12–16, usually arranged in 3 or 4 whorls, the terminal umbel larger than to about the same size as the laterals; lower bracts 70 mm long with a sheath 20 × 4–8 mm, stipules, and 1–2 pairs of leaflets, upper bracts smaller and simple with stipules. Lower compound umbels up to 70 mm long with peduncles up to 50 × 2.5 mm; primary bracteoles simple, up to 9 × 1 mm; simple umbels 13 with peduncles up to 15 × 0.8 mm; secondary bracteoles simple, up to 7 × 1 mm; 15 flowers per umbel, pedicels 3 × 0.2 mm. **Sepals** up to 0.8 mm long. **Petals** up to 1.4 × 0.7 mm, not inflexed; staminodes up to 0.6 mm long. **Male Inflorescence** up to 420 mm long, stem 290 × 8 mm, pale yellow to brown; head 140 × 105 mm, almost circular in outline; compound umbels c. 8, tending to be in 2–3 whorls, the terminal umbel generally larger than the laterals; bracts and bracteoles similar to female inflorescences; lower compound umbels up to 80 mm long with peduncles up to 15 × 0.4 mm; 20 flowers per umbel and pedicels up to 5 × 0.2 mm. **Sepals** up to 0.8 mm long. **Petals** up to 1.3 × 0.6 mm, not inflexed; stamens up to 2.5 mm long. **Mericarps** 4.1 x 2 mm, dull, pale brown, lateral ribs up to 0.4 mm wide; style up to 1.2 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most likely to be confused with *A. similis* Cheeseman which is found well north of the range of *A. lecomtei* in an area centred on the Two Thumb Range to about the Lewis Pass and west thereof. *A. lecomtei* differs from *A. similis* by its preference for rocky rather than grassland habitats, its more robust growth habit, larger rosettes and in having 4 pairs of leaflets rather than 6–7 or more. From *A. montana* J.F.Armstr. var. *montana*, *A. lecomtei* differs by having 4 rather than 3 leaflets, more clearly defined rosettes, and *A. lecomtei* has broad rather than narrow inflorescences. *Aciphylla montana* is allopatric from *A. lecomtei*.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (The Remarkables, Hector Mountains, and Garvie Mountains).

HABITAT
Alpine (1400–1900 m a.s.l.) usually on rock in steep crevices, leages and hollows of rock outcrops and cliff faces, or amongst boulders, rarely in surrounding tall-tussock grassland.

THREATS
A narrow range endemic common within its known geographic range. Accessible plants maybe browsed by animals.

GENUS
Aciphylla

FAMILY
Apiaceae

AUTHORITY
Aciphylla lecomtei J.W.Dawson

SYNONYMS
None (first described in 1979)

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
December–February

FRUITING
January–April

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Winged schizocarps are dispersed primarily by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Has been cultivated in the past by Mr Jim le Comte of Alouette Nurseries, Ashburton but probably not in cultivation now. Its cultural requirements are not clear but it was grown successfully for 10 years in Hamilton City in the Waikato in a sunny, free draining soil.

ETYMOLOGY
aciphylla: From the Latin acicula ‘needle’ and the Greek phyllum ‘leaf’, meaning needle-leaf.
lecomtei: Named after James Ronald LeComte (1927-1987), a New Zealand botanist specialising in the Aciphylla genus.

NVS CODE
ACILEC

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Range Restricted
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, NStr, Sp, TL 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

Dawson JW. 1979. *Aciphylla montana* Armstrong, *A. lecomtei* sp. nov., and related species. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 17(3)*: 339–351. https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1979.10426907.
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 28 May 2006: Description adapted from Dawson (1979).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/aciphylla-lecomtei/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026