

# Aciphylla squarrosa var. squarrosa

## COMMON NAMES

speargrass

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Usually, large plants up to 1 m tall, forming dense tussocks. **Leaves** numerous, 3-pinnate, spreading, subglaucous; margins and midribs crenulate-serrulate; occasionally plants may have some leaves 2-pinnate. Sheaths erect, whitish, fleshy except membranous margins, up to 150 × 50 mm; stipules with petiolate bases approximately 20 × 10 mm, unequal, 3-foliolate, outer segments up to 200 mm, inner to 60 mm, terminal to 250 mm long, pungent; petiolar or ligular portion sometimes up to about 40 mm long. **Petioles** up to about 150 mm × 1–2 mm, internodes up to 50 mm long. Primary pinnae usually 1 pair, again pinnate, internodes about 30 mm long; secondary pinnae usually 1 pair, again pinnate, sometimes bearing accessory pinnules; final segments up to 250 mm × 4 mm, concavo-convex, with long pungent points. **Flowering stems** of male plants ridged; up to approximately 80 cm × 20 mm including inflorescence up to approximately 40 cm long. **Bracts** numerous; sheaths pale, membranous, ridged, up to 40 × 10 mm, tapering to apex; stipules unequal, up to 30 × 1 mm. **Lamina** 3-foliolate; lateral pair of leaflets up to approximately 90 mm long; terminal leaflet to 200–250 × 3 mm, stiff, pungent, becoming strongly reflexed. **Umbels** on stout peduncles up to approximately 60–100 mm long, usually with lateral umbellules near base as well as at apex, up to about 40 mm diameter. Umbellules crowded, forming heads approximately 20 mm diameter; rays numerous, about 10 mm long. **Flowering stems** of female plants up to 100 cm tall including inflorescence up to approximately 60 cm tall. **Bract-sheaths** thin, ribbed; lower approximately 50 × 20 mm, stipules unequal, 40–80–(150) mm long. Lamina of lower sheaths pinnate, with occasionally accessory pinnules; petiole flat, about 10 mm long, internodes up to 20 mm long; pinnae 2 pairs; terminal leaflet up to 150 mm long, at length strongly reflexed. Umbels approximately 8, on stout peduncles approximately 50 mm long bearing lateral umbellules near base; involucre bracts linear. Umbellules up to 10, approximately 15 mm diameter, on short rays. Petals pale yellow. **Fruit** approximately 6–8 mm long; mericarps 3–4 winged.



Cape Turakirae. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Male inflorescence. In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 20/11/2004, Licence: CC BY.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Aciphylla squarrosa* var. *flaccida*, is distinguished from this species by not having appressed bract segments and having narrower flexible leaf segments (Dawson & LeComte, 1978).

*Aciphylla glaucescens*, when juvenile may be mistaken for this species; in general *A. glaucescens* is a larger species when mature up to 1.5 metres. In *A. squarrosa* the flowering stem bracts, are strongly reflexed, where in *A. glaucescens* they are not reflexed.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Mount Hikurangi south), South Island (to the Kaikoura Ranges).

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane.

## GENUS

Aciphylla

## FAMILY

Apiaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Aciphylla squarrosa* J.R.Forst. et G.Forst var. *squarrosa*

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Dawson & LeComte suggest this species is part of the group with clear juice. The *A. squarrosa* group is currently (2022) being revised so further information be revealed in the near future.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

November–March

## 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.

**squarrosa**: Rough, with scale-like projections; from the Latin *squarrosus*; leaves and leaf stalks

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, PD

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.
- Dawson JW, LeComte JR. 1978. Research on *Aciphylla* - a progress report. *Tuatara* 23: 49–67.
- 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

Description adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961).

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## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

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