

Aciphylla subflabellata

COMMON NAME

speargrass

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Apiaceae

AUTHORITY

Aciphylla subflabellata 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

ACISUB

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island in the east from south-eastern Marlborough to Southland

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine (300-1400 m a.s.l.). Usually in dry sites on alluvial terraces, gentle rolling slopes and colluvium, intermontane basins amongst short or tall tussocks and on the margins of grey scrub. Sometimes on or near rock outcrops or amongst boulders.

FEATURES

Stout perennial forming stout rosettes. Stems up to 0.8 m long. Leaves yellow-green to grey-green, narrowly subflabellate-bipinnate. Sheaths membranous, up to 20 mm long, ligules 2, up to 10 mm long; stipules 20 mm long, irregularly bipinnate. Petioles 25 x 5 mm, concavo-convex with internodes up to 25 mm long. Primary pinnae 3-4 pairs, these strongly serrulate-crenulate on midrib and margins, sometimes pinnate again with leaflets up to 200 x 3 mm, narrowly acicular. Stems stout, deeply grooved up to 1 m x 25 mm, including inflorescence 0.5-0.6 m long. Bracts numerous, close-set; sheaths up to 70 x 10 mm; stipules erect, simple to bifid, up to 150 x 1 mm; central leaflet up to 300 mm long, at length strongly reflexed, margins serrulate. Umbels exceeding the bract-sheaths especially in the male inflorescence. Mericarps 5-12 mm long with 5 ribs, 3-4 of these winged.



Upper Clarence (January). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Upper Clarence, Near Hamner. Photographer: Gillian Crowcroft

SIMILAR TAXA

Perhaps most similar to *A. squarrosa*, and in some ways resembling a more finely divided variant of it. *A. subflabellata* is a much smaller plant than the typical form of *A. squarrosa*, and differs by the subflabellate flattened leaves - a condition caused by the close-set leaf pinnae which are positioned more or less in the same plane as the leaf axis

FLOWERING

December - February

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

FRUITING

February - May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

One of the easier species to cultivate, though it dislikes humidity and excessive moisture. Should be planted in a sunny, free draining situation. Once planted do not transplant or disturb roots. Can be grown in a tub.

THREATS

Widespread but generally never common. Possibly it is more threatened than believed because many of its lowland habitats are extremely modified, weed infested and plants are browsed where accessible by cattle, rabbits and hares. Current herbarium evidence suggests that this species is still poorly known but that from available evidence it is naturally uncommon over large parts of its stated range.

ETYMOLOGY

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

subflabellata: Somewhat fan-like

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 September 2004). Description based on Allan 91961).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: *Flora of New Zealand*. Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington.

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* 11: 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/aciphylla-subflabellata/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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