Aciphylla traversii

COMMON NAMES
taramea karupuru, Chatham Island speargrass,

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Stout, tufted, dioecious (? gynodioecious) perennial up to 1 m tall. Taproot napiform. All parts exuding yellow-resinous exudate when damaged. Leaves, numerous, dark green to brown-green with pale, white or yellow margins and yellow interstices, somewhat flaccid to semi-rigid, margins smooth. Petiole 0.1–0.25 m long, broadly sheathed near base, sheaths up to 50 mm long, stipules spinulose. Leaf lamina 0.15–0.46 × 0.15–0.8 mm, pinnate, pinnae articulated to axis, striate, coriaceous, narrow-linear, longitudinal veins often conspicuous, these interrupted by prominent yellowish cross-veinlets at 10–30 mm spacing (sometimes less, sometimes more); primary pinnae in 2–4(–6) pairs, these 100–460 mm long, 5–10 mm wide, secondary pinnae very infrequent, if present then as 2(–4) pairs, 20–30 mm long, 4–8 mm wide. Inflorescences an open panicle up to 1.0 × 0.4 m, main axis stout, and rigidly firm when fresh with fibrous outer layer and white, pithy inner, long persistent after flowering / seeds has been dispersed, inner portion hollowing and outer eventually breaking into long fibrous shards when spent. Umbels with (6–)8–10(–16), subpaniculate. Peduncules 30–60(–80) mm long stout, striate. Primary bracts up to 50 mm long, 6 mm wide, variable, often linear deltoid, broad at base gradually tapering, white in ≣ inflorescences yellow-green in ≣ submembranous, margins smooth, apices bluntly pungent; otherwise with pinkish bases, submembranous, with upper half rigid, green, pungent; upper most primary bracts often 3-foliolate, coriaceous, green pungent. ≣ umbels with 10–16(or more) rays up to 8 mm long, slender, ≣ umbels similar but with 6–8 (rarely more) rays. Involucral bracts often absent, if present lanceolate, acuminate, caducous. Flowers of ≣ (≣ ?) creamy white, those of ≣ greenish yellow or pale yellow; ≣ petals 2.0–2.5(–3.0) mm long, ovate-oblong, ≣ petals 1.8–2.2 mm long, oblong. Fruit 8–10 × 6 mm long, tan, golden-brown or brown when mature, mericarps 3–5-winged, vittae 1–2 per furrow, 3–5 commissural.



Ocean Mail, Chatham Island. Photographer: John Sawyer, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Chatham islands, Ocean Mail. Photographer: John Sawyer, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Aciphylla traversii is one of two species of *Aciphylla* on the Chatham Islands, the other *A. dieffenbachii* is a very different looking plant of coastal cliff faces and sand dune habitats. Because of their different habitat preferences the ranges of both taramea rarely overlap. *Aciphylla traversii* is however, distinguished from *A. dieffenbachii* by the less divided, erect, more rigid dark green, brown-green rather than heavily divided, flaccid, decurved blue-green leaves, and by the production of yellowish resinous exudate, rather than white latex. The inflorescences of *Aciphylla traversii* are also stoutly erect with the umbels more evenly spaced, rather than globose, semi-aggregated. The subtending bracts of *A. dieffenbachii* are pinnatifid, those of *Aciphylla traversii* usually simple sometimes 3-foliolate. Despite these differences and ecological partitioning there is some evidence that both species can hybridise with each other.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Rekohu (Chatham), Rangihaute (Pitt) and Mang'ere Islands. *Aciphylla traversii* was recorded from Mang'ere in 1968 but it has not been seen there since. The record is unsubstantiated by a herbarium specimen, and as there is no suitable habitat for this species on that island, this record must be considered suspect.

HABITAT
A species of peat bogs and open sandy/peaty soils. *Aciphylla traversii* is most commonly encountered on the margins of bogs and peat lakes, it can be locally common following on peat that has been recently burned, and is often found along trails and tracks through restiad peat bogs.

THREATS
Domestic stock and feral mammals are prime threats. Rodents probably eat seeds and seedlings; possums probably eat flowers and seedlings. Over-topping by regenerating shrubs and trees presents a threat of shading out the speargrass.

GENUS
Aciphylla

FAMILY
Apiaceae

AUTHORITY
Aciphylla traversii (F.Muell.) Hook.f.

SYNONYMS
Gingidium traversii F. Muell.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November - February

FRUITING
January - June

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FAC: Facultative
Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
aciphylla: From the Latin acicula 'needle' and the Greek phyllum 'leaf', meaning needle-leaf.
traversii: Named after William Thomas Locke Travers (1819-1903) who was an Irish lawyer, magistrate, politician, explorer, naturalist, photographer. He lived in New Zealand from 1849 and was a fellow of the Linnean Society.

NVS CODE
ACITRV

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 22

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Recovering | Qualifiers: CD, EF, IE, RR
2012 | At Risk – Recovering | Qualifiers: CD, EF, IE, RR
2009 | At Risk – Recovering | Qualifiers: CD, EF, IE, RR
2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered
Jump to current conservation status

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 25 April 2022. Description by P.J. de Lange 25 April 2022

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
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MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/aciphylla-traversii/

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27 May 2026