

Aciphylla leighii

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Distinctive stocky herb, close-set rosettes up to 70 mm in diameter forming a cushion-like plant up to 1 m across, taproot stout, deeply descending. **Leaves** approximately 5 cm long, spreading, 3-foliolate (including the diverging stipules); sheaths approximately 35 mm long, white with hyaline margins, thickening above and curving outwards, striate, narrowing upwards to 6 mm from base 10 mm wide, milky juice copious. **Lamina** about 16 mm x 4 mm, linear-oblong, dark green, shallowly canaliculate; margins cartilaginous, apex blunt to retuse (but with short mucro). Male plants with striate **flowering stems** up to about 5 cm long, surrounded by paniculately arranged compound umbels forming an inflorescence approximately 40–60 mm diameter. Primary rays 3–4, rather stout, unequal, up to approximately 40 mm long, invested by general involucre of leaf-like bracts about 20 mm long. **Secondary umbels** up to 20–25 mm diameter, with narrow-linear acicular bracteoles approximately 10 mm long (occasionally with trifoliolate lamina); rays 7–10, up to approximately 6 mm long. **Tertiary umbels** crowded, 5–6 mm long; bracteoles filiform. Sepals greenish, incurved, linear, acute, enlarging after petal-fall to 2 mm long, with short claw. Stamens exerted at anthesis; petals minute, white. Female plants not described in detail.

SIMILAR TAXA

Aciphylla dobsonii larger plant than *A. leighii*; leaves are longer at about 10 cm long, leaf tips are hard and very sharp, peduncles are very stout compared to rather slender in *A. leighii*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, Fiordland, Darran Mountains.

HABITAT

Confined to fellfield (1800–2000 m.a.s.l.).

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

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DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Apiaceae

AUTHORITY

Aciphylla leighii Allan

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Rogers *et. al.*, suggest this species may hybridise with *Aciphylla congesta*, as a possible explanation for the variation in leaf apices.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes



Aciphylla leighii. Photographer: Geoffrey M. Rogers, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Aciphylla leighii. Photographer: Geoffrey M. Rogers, Licence: CC BY-SA.

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

December - January

FRUITING

February - March

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

OTHER INFORMATION

ETYMOLOGY

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

NVS CODE

ACILEI

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, St

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H. H. 1961. *Flora of New Zealand*. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. pg. 469-470.

Lyttle, D. 2021 Personal Communication 14th December, Flowering times, Specimen collected used for Nancy Adams painting, circa 1969.

Mark, A. F. 2012. *Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand*. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg. 150.

Rogers, G., Torr, S., Coats, G., Rance, B., 1999. *Aciphylla leighii* - A Nival Zone Speargrass from the Darran Mountains, Fiordland. *New Zealand Botanical Society Journal* No 57. September 1999. Pg. 12-15.

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* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

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

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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