

Aciphylla spedenii

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

A tufted sprawling prickly cushion herb formed of multiple rosettes up to 0.5 metres across. Leaves have red-tinged sharp-points and grow in fans, glaucous to pale-green coloured, spikes of whiteish flowers protrude on elongated stems up to 250 mm long.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rootstock stout, simple to multicapital, with solitary rosettes, or these forming clumps up to 30 cm diameter. **Leaves** rather soft, striate, with membranous sheaths approximately 80 × 15-20 mm, hyaline-margined. Stipules leaflike, 60-70 × 2-3 mm, pungent; petioles not more than 5 mm long; leaflets subflabellately pentafoliate, with very short internodes. Pinnæ up to 80 × 3 mm, subrigid, coriaceous, striate; margins and midribs thickened; apices pungent. **Stems of male** plants stout, up to 150 mm long excluding the somewhat globose inflorescence, up to 100 mm diameter. **Bracts** flaccid, with broad membranous sheaths, short linear stipules and lamina of 5-6 pinnules. **Umbels** several to unlimited on peduncles up to 25 mm long; umbellules without bracteoles. Calyx-teeth minute; petals white, clawed. (lacking information about female inflorescence) **Fruit** 4.2-5 mm long, 5 evenly winged ribs, elliptic, pale orange-yellow, vittae not very evident.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most similar to *Aciphylla congesta* which is slightly larger in some parts (compared to *A. spedenii*), flowering stem up to 300 mm (up to 150 mm), globe of flowers 120 mm diameter (100 mm diameter). *A. congesta* lacks the red-tipped leaves, more green coloured than glaucous.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Te Waipounamu | **South Island**, northern Southland, Eyre Mountains.

HABITAT

High alpine (1700-1900 m.a.s.l.), fellfields.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

DETAILED TAXONOMY

GENUS

Aciphylla

FAMILY

Apiaceae

AUTHORITY

Aciphylla spedenii Cheeseman



Hummock Peak (November). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

December – January.

FRUITING

January – February.

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.

spedenii: Named after James Speden who was a New Zealand explorer

NVS CODE

ACISPE

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, NS, NStr, RR, Sp, St, 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.

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. pg. 470.

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

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>.

Webb CJ & Simpson MJA. 2001. *Seeds of NZ gymnosperms and dicotyledons*. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (December 19th 2025). Description adapted from Allan (1961) & Mark (2012).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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