

# Acaena microphylla var. microphylla

## COMMON NAMES

bidibid, piripiri

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

An evergreen shiny green and or bronze herb, which forms a dense mat spreading up to ½ a metre across and about 2 cm in height. The plant is in general a small species of the genus. Found in the central North Island in unconsolidated substrates like river gravels. The pinnate leaves are sharply toothed and have tiny hairs on the tips. The globe shaped flower balls are white, on short stems then grow into a cluster of red non-barbed spikes, which when ripe brown off.

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous, prostrate, trailing perennial herb, forming a mat up to 0.5 metres in diameter. **Stems** 1 mm diameter, up to 25 cm long, and/or 2 cm high, rooting at nodes; **Stipules** entire; **Leaves** odd-pinnate, between 5-30 mm long with 9-15 leaflets; **Leaflets** orbicular 1.5-4 × 1.5-4 mm, serrated blunt-toothed margin, 5-7 teeth minutely hair-tipped, lower leaflets gradually reduce in size, green or bronze shiny upper surface obvious veins, lower surface paler and sparsely hairy; **Inflorescence scape** 7-25 mm, bearing shaggy hairs; **Capitulum** about 5 mm diameter when flowering, composed of up to 20 florets, each floret has 4 sepals, 2 stamen, white anthers, 2 white styles, 2 achenes; **Fruit** roughly cone-shaped, each having 4 pink or crimson pointed barbless spines (occasionally no spines), up to 15 mm long, which mature dry, brown or golden brown when ripe.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Acaena microphylla* var. *pauciglochidiata* is very similar with a couple of differences, the capitula is stalkless compared to a scape of 7-25 mm in *A. microphylla* var. *microphylla*; also, the capitula has less florets 2-4, whereas *A. microphylla* var. *microphylla* has up to 20; the fruit spines are tipped with a few hairs compared to bald in *A. microphylla* var. *microphylla*.

*Acaena anserinifolia* a very close relative, at a glance is similar to both of the *A. microphylla* varieties, it does however have larger proportions in numerous aspects. The leaves can reach 75 mm in length, it has more florets than both species 50-60, a longer scape than both species 40-120 mm, and barbed spines.

*Acaena rorida* is similar to both of the *A. microphylla* varieties. Growing in only one area its range does not overlap with the nearest *A. microphylla* var. *microphylla*. *Acaena microphylla* has smaller, shiny green or bronze leaves; scapes are shorter 6-15 mm compared to up to 25 mm long in *A. microphylla* var. *microphylla*. The capitula has up to 10 florets, whereas *A. microphylla* var. *microphylla* has up to 20 florets.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Central **North Island**.



Tongariro, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Rare on river terrace in gravel, Kaimanawa. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 25/03/2024, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## HABITAT

Montane to low alpine (500-1300 m.a.s.l.), grassland, river terraces.

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## DETAILED TAXONOMY

### GENUS

Acaena

### FAMILY

Rosaceae

### AUTHORITY

Acaena microphylla Hook.f. var. microphylla

### ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

### ENDEMIC GENUS

No

### ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## ECOLOGY

### FLOWERING

November-January.

### FRUITING

January-April.

### LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Spiny hypanthia are dispersed by attaching to fur, feathers and clothing and possibly also dispersed by wind and granivory (Thorsen et al., 2009)

## OTHER INFORMATION

### ETYMOLOGY

**acaena**: From the Greek 'akanthos' thorn, referring to the spiny calyx that many species have

**microphylla**: Small leaf

### NVS CODE

ACAMVC

### CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.42

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Volume 1. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. pg. 357.
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- Lee WG, Macmillan BH, Partridge TR, Lister R, Lloyd KM. 2001. Fruit features in relation to the ecology and distribution of *Acaena* (Rosaceae) species in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Ecology*. 25(1): pp.17–27.
- Macmillan BH. 1991. *Acaena rorida* and *Acaena tesca* (Rosaceae)—two new species from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, 29(2): pp.131–138.
- 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

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (August 28th 2025). Description adapted from Lloyd (2001), Allan (1961), Hooker (1853).

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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/acaena-microphylla-var-microphylla/>

## PDF DATE

22 September 2025