

Aciphylla colensoi

COMMON NAMES

giant speargrass, taramea

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Large thick spikey green-leaved clumps with an obvious yellow flower spike. Leaf midrib obvious and red or reddish-orange.

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small to large tufted herb to 1 m tall when in flower. Rosettes single or multiple. **Leaves** many, stout, 1-pinnate to occasionally 2-pinnate, to 300-500 mm long; sheath thin, to 60 mm long; **stipules** stiff, simple or occasionally with small accessory pinnules, to 700 × 4 mm, tapering, pungent; **petioles** to 100 mm long, stout, winged; lower internodes (inter-pinna spacing) 30-40 mm long, decreasing up leaf; pinnae 2-4 pairs, slender, strongly serrulate, midrib broad, prominent, red to orange, lower laminae of pinna to 200-400(-450) × 10-14 mm, narrowing to pungent apex. **Flowering stem** of male and female similar (female narrower and darker), narrow-oblong, 1 metre or more long; lower bract sheaths to 30 × 12 mm tapering to long pungent tips; lower bract lamina ribbed, 90-110 × 3-4 mm wide, with stout prominent red to yellow midrib, apex with pungent point to 3 mm long. **Umbels** crowded, distributed along from near base of flower spike peduncle; umbellules crowded, on slender rays to 1 cm long. **Fruit** of two mericarps; mericarps narrow to elliptic, (7.0-)8.0-12.0 mm, with 3-4(-5) even narrowly winged ribs, other ribs not evident, vittae evident as dark ribs between wings or largely obscured.

SIMILAR TAXA

Similar in some aspects to *Aciphylla scott-thomsonii*, but this species is larger, glaucous and without the obvious reddish midveins.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Te Ika-a-Māui | **North Island** and Te Waipounamu | **South Island**, Mt Hikurangi south to mid-Canterbury.

HABITAT

Montane to low-alpine (900 - 1500 m.a.s.l.), grassland and shrubland.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

DETAILED TAXONOMY

GENUS

Aciphylla

FAMILY

Apiaceae



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



Aciphylla colensoi. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Licence: CC BY-SA.

AUTHORITY

Aciphylla colensoi Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

Aciphylla indurata Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

(September-)November - February.

FRUITING

december - April.

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.

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

NVS CODE

ACICOL

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

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 I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones.* Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

Mark AF & Adams NM. 1995. *New Zealand alpine plants, 2nd Edition.* Godwit Publishing, Auckland.

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 New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons.* Manuka Press, Christchurch. 428 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Allan (1961), Mark Adams (1995) and Webb, C.J. & Simpson (2001).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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