

# Aciphylla kirkii

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

A spiky robust rosette forming herb up to 0.3 metres across. Leaves are sharp-pointed and rich green to yellow-green coloured, spikes of dark or cream coloured flowers are guarded by bright orange spiky bracts extend on elongated stems up to 300 mm long.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Brown

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Plant forming rigid tufts up to about 0.3 metres tall including inflorescence. **Leaves** up to 200 × 20 mm; sheaths thin, about 50 × 10 mm; stipules leaflike, up to 50 × 5 mm, stiff, coriaceous, oblong, abruptly narrowed to pungent apex (rarely vestigial); petioles up to approximately 10 mm long; pinnae 1-(2) pairs, similar to stipules, very thick and coriaceous, margins much thickened, abruptly narrowed to pungent tips. **Stems of male** plants stout, strongly grooved, up to 400 × 8 mm including **inflorescence** up to 150 mm long. Bracts rigid, erect, lower stipuled, upper usually simple; sheaths very short, stipules spreading, generally about 20 mm long; lamina narrow-oblong, up to 40 × 2-3 mm, pungent. **Umbels** several, on very short rays. **Stems of female** flexuous, finely grooved; **inflorescence** 50-100 mm long; **Umbels** several, ± 5-10-fld, flowers sessile or nearly so. **Fruit** about 5mm long; mericarps 4-5-winged; vittae 1-2 per furrow, usually 4 commissural.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Possible to mistake this species for *Aciphylla hectorii* which has an overlap in its distribution. Overall the plant is smaller, the pinnae are similar yet are smaller width, 5 mm, compared to 10-15 mm in *A. kirkii* pinnae.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Te Waipounamu | **South Island**, central and western Otago, east of the Southern Alps.

## HABITAT

Low to high alpine (1300 – 200 m.a.s.l.), snow tussock grassland, fellfield, herbfield, cushionfield.

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

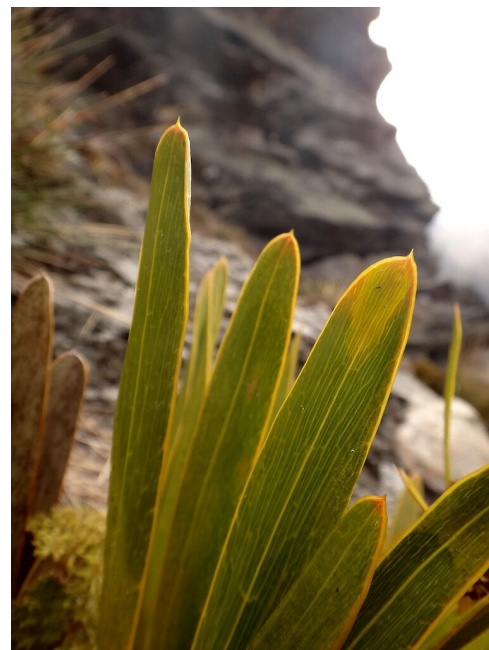
## DETAILED TAXONOMY

## GENUS

Aciphylla



Harris Mountains, Otago, 1750m. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 24/01/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC.



leaf detail, Harris Mountains, Otago, 1750m. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 24/01/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## FAMILY

Apiaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Aciphylla kirkii* Buchanan

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## ECOLOGY

## FLOWERING

December – 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.

**kirkii**: After Thomas Kirk (18 January 1828 - 8 March 1898), a NZ botanist and lecturer in natural sciences and regarded as a leader of botanical enquiry in NZ for over three decades. One of his most significant publications was *Forest flora of NZ* (1889) but he also contributed over 130 papers to the *Transactions and Proceedings of the NZ Institute* and other journals.

## NVS CODE

ACIKIR

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NS, NStr, Sp, 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. 1085 p.
- Mark AF. 2012. *Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand*. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg.144.
- 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**

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (December 18th 2025). Description adapted from Allan (1961) & Mark (2012).

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### **MORE INFORMATION**

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

### **PDF DATE**

21 December 2025