

# Aciphylla lyallii

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Variable sparse-leaved tufted herb, simple to branched leaves. **Leaves** pinnate, up to approximately 30 cm long. **Sheaths** approximately 50 x 10 mm, with pale membranous margins; **stipules** approximately 20 mm x 2 mm, tapering to pungent apex; **petioles** keeled, up to about 100 mm long, lower internodes approximately 30 mm long. **Primary pinnae** 2 pairs, up to 100 mm x 3 mm, sometimes with short accessory pinnule; margins thickened, smooth. Rarely some specimens have simple leaves and sometimes leaves are exstipulate. **Flowering stems** of male plants slender to rather stout, up to approximately 40 cm long including narrow inflorescence up to 20 cm long. **Bract-sheaths** approximately 40mm x 15 mm, thin; stipules up to 15 mm long, linear, pungent; lamina with up to 3 pairs of pinnae up to 15 mm long, terminal leaflet up to 20 mm long. **Umbels** on slender peduncles up to approximately 30 mm long; umbellules several, up to approximately 10 mm diameter, on filiform unequal rays. **Flowering stems** of female plants grooved, up to 90 cm x 5 mm including inflorescence about 20 cm long, **Bracts** erect, concealing umbels; sheaths approximately 40 mm x 10 mm, rather thick; stipules approximately 10 x 2 mm, narrowed to pungent apex; lamina of 1-2 pinnae approximately 30 mm long, terminal leaflet slightly longer. Umbellules few. **Fruit** approximately 5 mm long; mericarps 5-winged; vittae 1-2 per furrow, 2-4 commissural.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Differs from most other similar stature species by the large sheaths that almost entirely envelop the seeds. Mark (2012) suggests when not in fruit the irregular spaced joints on the leaves can be used to confirm an identification.

From the *A. montana* group, Dawson (1979), suggests in *A. lyallii* the petiole is concave compared to convex in the former; petiole margins are acute compared to rounded; leaves of young plants are simple compared to pinnate; adult leaves may remain simple compared to adult leaves never being simple.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, throughout wetter mountain regions, common in Fiordland, absent from Nelson.

## HABITAT

Low-alpine (1100-1400 m.a.s.l.) favours permanently wet habitat within tussock-herbfield, often overlooked.

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

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## DETAILED TAXONOMY



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



Craigieburn ski field, Canterbury. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 29/01/2011, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## FAMILY

Apiaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Aciphylla lyallii* Hook.f.

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

In Allan (1961), it is suggested there is some confusion regarding specimens which have been collected as *A. cuthbertiana*, these are proven to be the same species and then regarded as a synonym.

*A. montana* was initially treated as a synonym of *A. lyallii*, until being further researched and thoroughly described by Dawson (1979).

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## ECOLOGY

## FLOWERING

December - January

## FRUITING

December - 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.

**lyallii**: Named after David Lyall (1817-1895), 19th century Scottish naturalist and surgeon with the Royal Navy, who explored Antarctica, New Zealand, the Arctic and North America and was a lifelong friend of Sir Joseph Hooker.

## NVS CODE

ACILYA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## 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: 2024 | At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, NR, NS, Sp

## REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Allan, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. pg. 477.
- Dawson, J.W. 1979 *Aciphylla montana* Armstrong, *A. lecomtei* sp. nov., and related species. *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, 17:3, 339-351.
- Mark, A. F. 2012. *Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand*. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg.148.
- 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-lyallii/>

## PDF DATE

11 March 2025