

Aciphylla squarrosa var. squarrosa

COMMON NAMES

speargrass

BIOSTATUS

Native

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Usually, large plants up to 1 m tall, forming dense tussocks. **Leaves** numerous, 3-pinnate, spreading, subglaucous; margins and midribs crenulate-serrulate; occasionally plants may have some leaves 2-pinnate. Sheaths erect, whitish, fleshy except membranous margins, up to 150 × 50 mm; stipules with petiolate bases approximately 20 × 10 mm, unequal, 3-foliolate, outer segments up to 200 mm, inner to 60 mm, terminal to 250 mm long, pungent; petiolar or ligular portion sometimes up to about 40 mm long. **Petioles** up to about 150 mm × 1–2 mm, internodes up to 50 mm long. Primary pinnae usually 1 pair, again pinnate, internodes about 30 mm long; secondary pinnae usually 1 pair, again pinnate, sometimes bearing accessory pinnules; final segments up to 250 mm × 4 mm, concavo-convex, with long pungent points. **Flowering stems** of male plants ridged; up to approximately 80 cm × 20 mm including inflorescence up to approximately 40 cm long. **Bracts** numerous; sheaths pale, membranous, ridged, up to 40 × 10 mm, tapering to apex; stipules unequal, up to 30 × 1 mm. **Lamina** 3-foliolate; lateral pair of leaflets up to approximately 90 mm long; terminal leaflet to 200–250 × 3 mm, stiff, pungent, becoming strongly reflexed. **Umbels** on stout peduncles up to approximately 60–100 mm long, usually with lateral umbellules near base as well as at apex, up to about 40 mm diameter. Umbellules crowded, forming heads approximately 20 mm diameter; rays numerous, about 10 mm long. **Flowering stems** of female plants up to 100 cm tall including inflorescence up to approximately 60 cm tall. **Bract-sheaths** thin, ribbed; lower approximately 50 × 20 mm, stipules unequal, 40–80–(150) mm long. Lamina of lower sheaths pinnate, with occasionally accessory pinnules; petiole flat, about 10 mm long, internodes up to 20 mm long; pinnae 2 pairs; terminal leaflet up to 150 mm long, at length strongly reflexed. Umbels approximately 8, on stout peduncles approximately 50 mm long bearing lateral umbellules near base; involucre bracts linear. Umbellules up to 10, approximately 15 mm diameter, on short rays. Petals pale yellow. **Fruit** approximately 6–8 mm long; mericarps 3–4 winged.

SIMILAR TAXA

Aciphylla squarrosa var. *flaccida*, is distinguished from this species by not having appressed bract segments and having narrower flexible leaf segments (Dawson & LeComte, 1978).

Aciphylla glaucescens, when juvenile may be mistaken for this species; in general *A. glaucescens* is a larger species when mature up to 1.5 metres. In *A. squarrosa* the flowering stem bracts, are strongly reflexed, where in *A. glaucescens* they are not reflexed.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Mount Hikurangi south), South Island (to the Kaikoura Ranges).



Cape Turakirae. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Male inflorescence. In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 20/11/2004, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Apiaceae

AUTHORITY

Aciphylla squarrosa J.R.Forst. et G.Forst var. *squarrosa*

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Dawson & LeComte suggest this species is part of the group with clear juice. The *A. squarrosa* group is currently (2022) being revised so further information be revealed in the near future.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–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.

squarrosa: Rough, with scale-like projections; from the Latin *squarrosus*; leaves and leaf stalks

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, PD

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

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.

Dawson JW, LeComte JR. 1978. Research on *Aciphylla* - a progress report. *Tuatara* 23: 49–67.

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

Description adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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