

Pirri-pirri bur

Scan for more information



Species Description

Scientific name: *Acaena* spp.

AKA: Bidibid

Native to: New Zealand, Australia and South America

Habitat: Woodland, forestry plantations and tracks, sand dunes, railway embankments and other bare ground

Acaena is a genus of about 60 species, they are mat-forming perennial with a woody base and herbaceous stems. They are considered a dwarf shrub and are mainly evergreen.

It was introduced to UK as an ornamental plant, but also may have arrived with contaminated wool imports. Its ability to attach to livestock, animals, clothing and textiles, along with improper garden plant disposal has led to subsequent spread in the environment.

In Northern Ireland the 2 most common species are *Acaena ovalifolia* (Two-spined acaena - native to South America) and *Acaena novae-zelandiae* (pirri-pirri bur - native to New Zealand and Australia). Both species have a similar appearance.

***Acaena ovalifolia*:** has a woody stem, its leaves pinnate, 5-12cm long, 3-5 pairs of finely wrinkled leaflets (underside green) 10-13mm long, 1.5 to twice as long as wide. Flower is spherical, up to 4cm in diameter, 2 spines per fruit (8-10mm long), barded and red.

***Acaena novae-zelandiae*:** woody stem only at base, 2-6 pairs of leaflets. Deeply toothed (7-12 on each side), smooth oblong-shaped, bright green on upper surface, paler underneath. Greenish-white, spherical head of small flowers up to 4 spines per flower (6-10mm long). Seed head is a spherical burr with 4 red barded spines.

All *Acaena* species are listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and as such, it is an offence to plant or other-wise allow this species to grow in the wild.



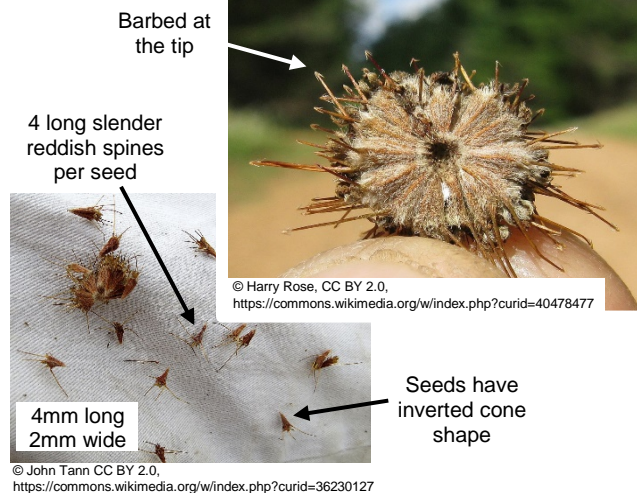
Acaena ovalifolia. © Krzysztof Ziarnek, Kenraiz, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=76532230>

Key ID Features

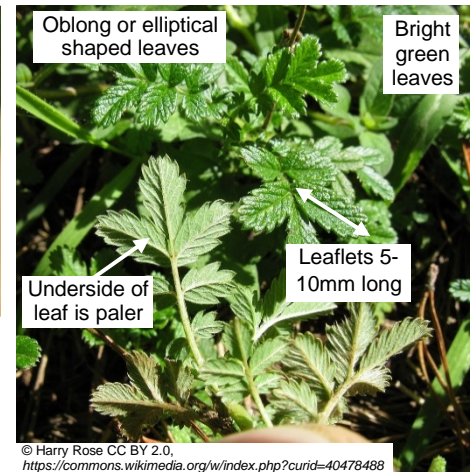
Pirri-pirri burr
Invasive non-native
(*Acaena novae-zelandiae*)



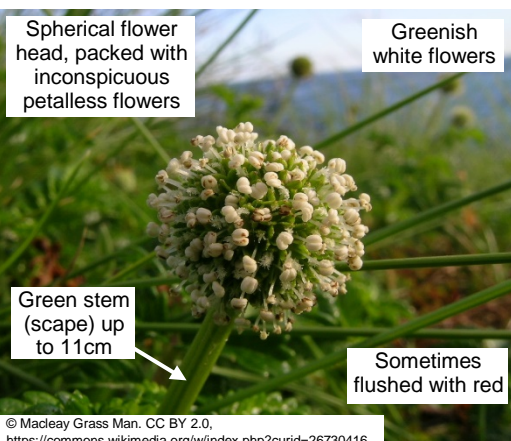
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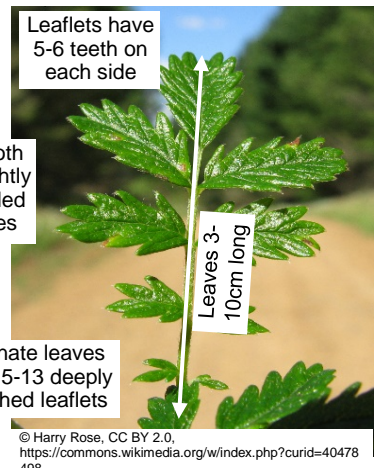
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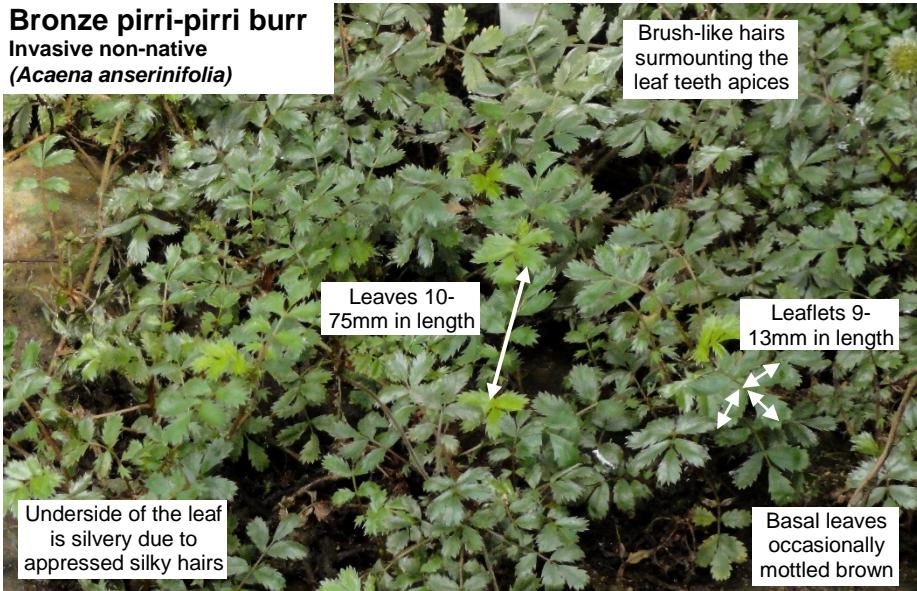


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Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting>

Similar Species

Bronze pirri-pirri burr
 Invasive non-native
 (*Acaena anserinifolia*)



Brush-like hairs surmounting the leaf teeth apices

Leaves 10-75mm in length

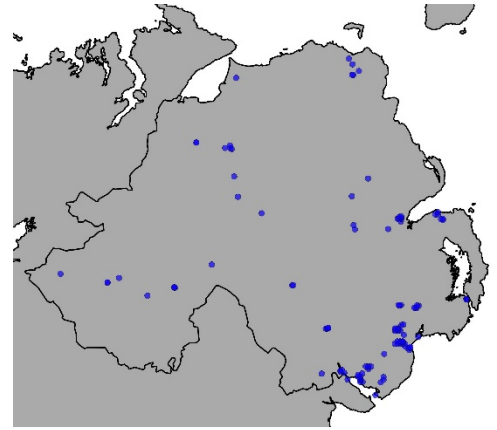
Leaflets 9-13mm in length

Underside of the leaf is silvery due to appressed silky hairs

Basal leaves occasionally mottled brown

Distribution

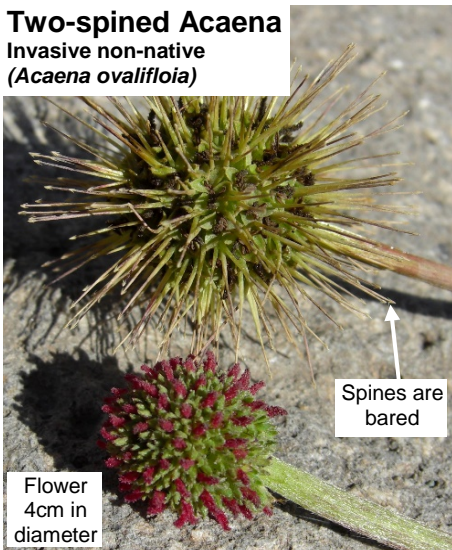
Records of *Acaena* spp. in Northern Ireland



Source: NBN atlas available

<https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000461222>
 Check website for current distribution

Two-spined Acaena
 Invasive non-native
 (*Acaena ovalifolia*)



2 spines per fruit

Spines 8-10mm

Spines are bared

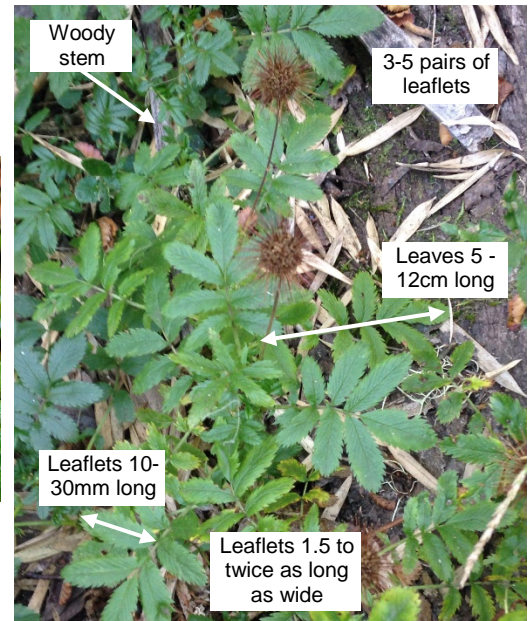
Flower 4cm in diameter

Red spines

Leaves finely wrinkled, green underside

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© Jason Hollinger - *Acaena ovalifolia*, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24215254>



Woody stem

3-5 pairs of leaflets

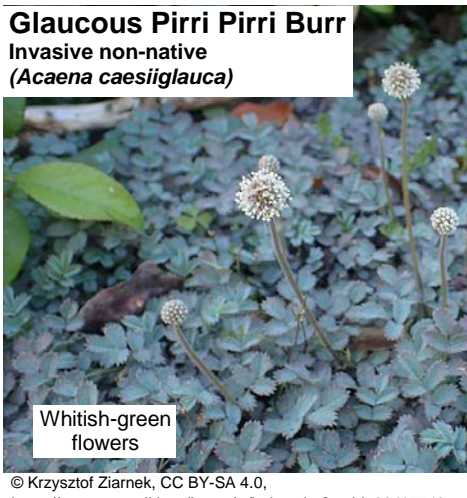
Leaves 5-12cm long

Leaflets 10-30mm long

Leaflets 1.5 to twice as long as wide

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Glaucous Pirri Pirri Burr
 Invasive non-native
 (*Acaena caesiiglauca*)



Serrated toothed leaflets

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Silky bluish grey in colour

Whitish-green flowers

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References and further reading:

Booy O, Wade M. and Roy H. 2015. Field Guide to Invasive Plants and Animals in Britain. Bloomsbury. London.
 de Lange, P.J. (2020): *Acaena anserinifolia* Fact Sheet. New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/acaena-anserinifolia/>

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.