

Pirri-pirri bur

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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.

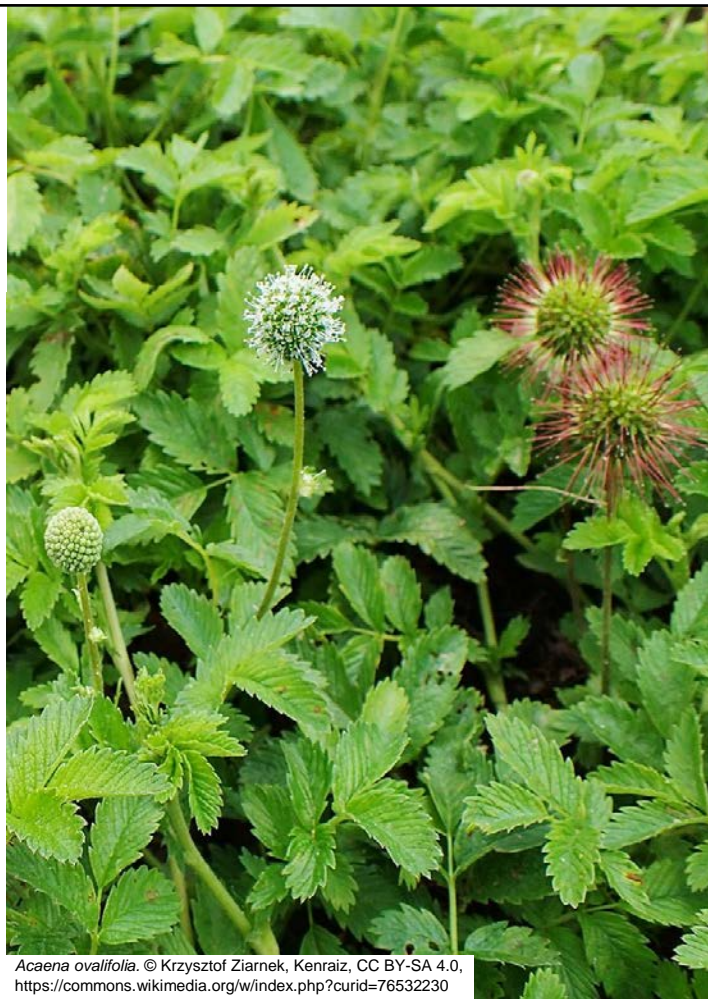
It was introduced to UK as an ornamental plant, but also may have arrived with contaminated wool imports. Its ability to attach to livestock, animals, clothing and textiles, along with improper garden plant disposal has led to subsequent spread in the environment.

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

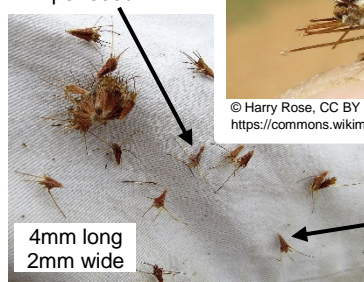
Pirri-pirri burr
Invasive non-native
(*Acaena novae-zelandiae*)



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Barbed at the tip

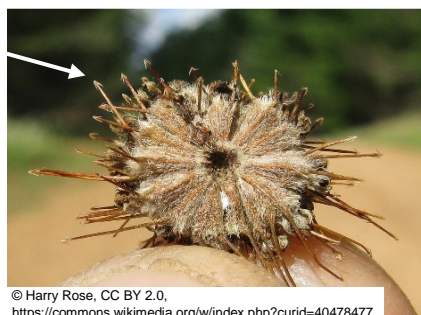
4 long slender reddish spines per seed



4mm long
2mm wide

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Seeds have inverted cone shape



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Oblong or elliptical shaped leaves

Bright green leaves



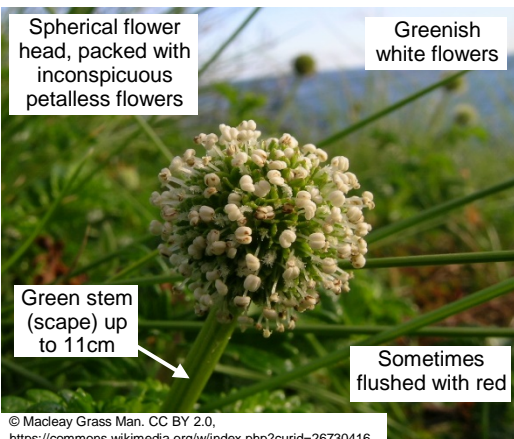
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Underside of leaf is paler

Leaflets 5-10mm long

Spherical flower head, packed with inconspicuous petalless flowers

Greenish white flowers



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Green stem (scape) up to 11cm

Sometimes flushed with red

Creeping mat-forming

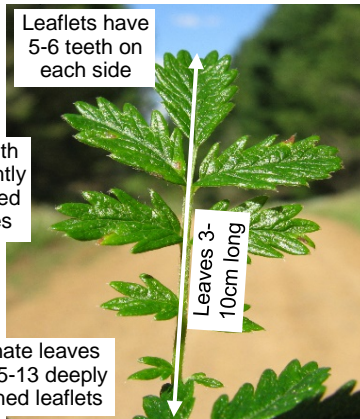


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Smooth to slightly wrinkled leaves

Leaflets have 5-6 teeth on each side

Pinnate leaves with 5-13 deeply toothed leaflets



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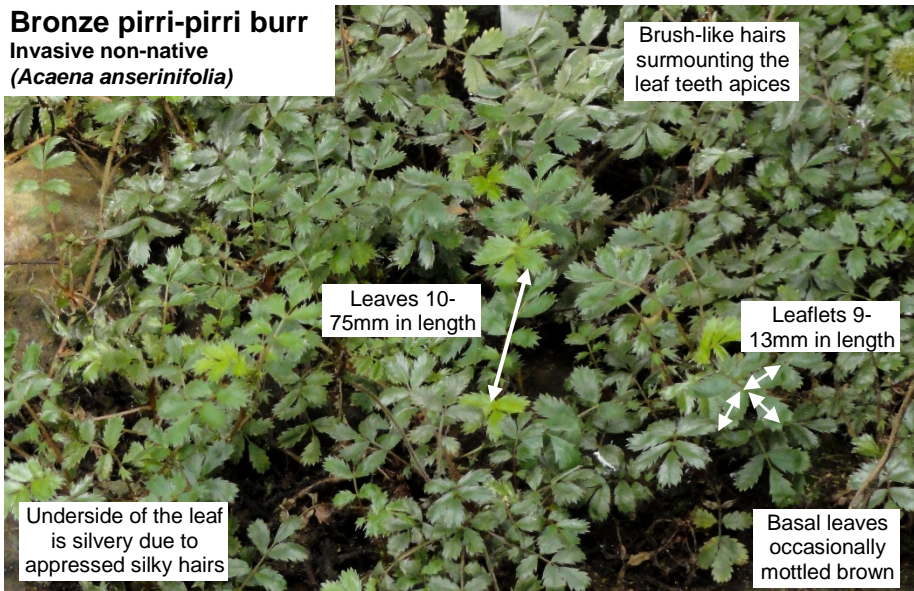
Leaves 3-10cm long

Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>,

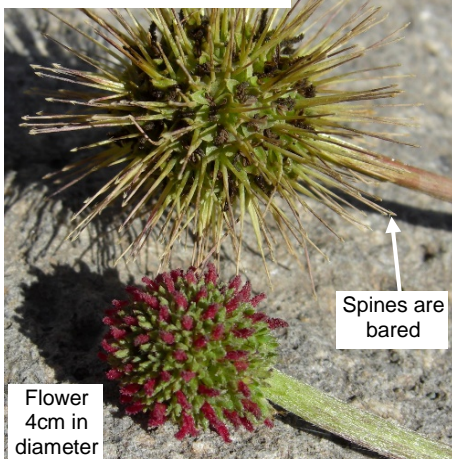
iRecord app or Invasive Species Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting>

Similar Species

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



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



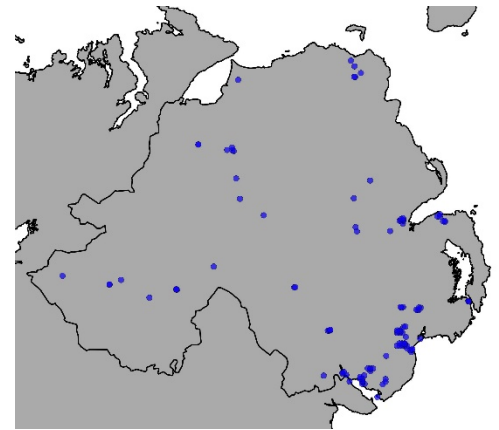
© Jason Hollinger - *Acaena ovalifolia*, CC BY 2.0,
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Distribution

Records of *Acaena* spp. in Northern Ireland



Source: NBN atlas available
<https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000461222>
Check website for current distribution

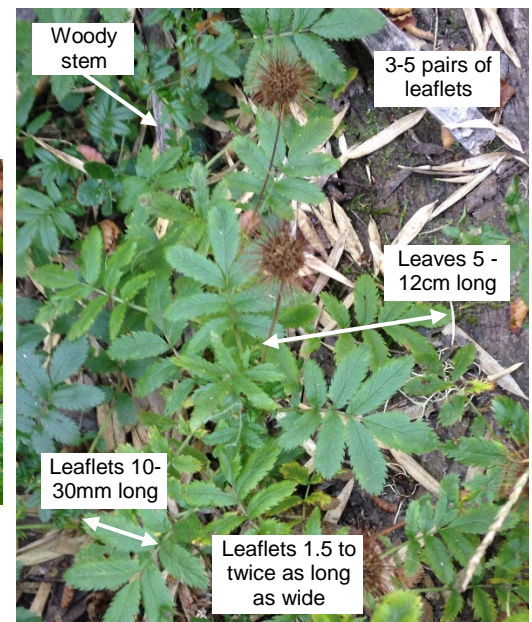
Glaucous Pirri Pirri Burr Invasive non-native (*Acaena caesiiglaucia*)



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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/>