

Pimelea acra

COMMON NAMES

pimelea

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low growing shrub bearing pairs of narrow pointed blue-green leaves with a few hairs on the underside and along margin (lens needed) inhabiting volcanic outcrops near Whangarei and on Little Barrier Island. Twigs hairy. Leaves slightly ridged on the underside, 5-7mm long. Flowers white, body hairy, in clusters. Fruit red.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A medium-sized, erect to suberect, much-branched, compact or spreading shrub, up to 450 mm tall. Young branchlets usually densely clad in fine, appressed hair; internode length 2 mm or less; older stems glabrate to glabrous, greyish-brown to dark grey. Node buttresses short (0.3 mm) lunate, glabrous, dark brown, hidden by hair on young stems, moderately prominent on leafless stems. Leaves decussate, on short (0.3–1.0 mm), often red petioles, ascendant, becoming patent, not persistent; lamina 5.0–7.0 × 2.0–2.5 mm, medium green, ovate to elliptic, usually slightly keeled, uniform in size, acute, base cuneate; glabrous above with sparse or sometimes moderately dense hair below and then mainly on midvein, margins, and tip. Midvein prominent below, lateral veins not evident. Stomata usually only on upper side of leaf; some individuals have a few stomata on the lower leaf surface. Inflorescences terminal on branchlets, 4–8-flowered. Involucral bracts 4, similar in size to or wider than adjacent leaves (6–10 × 3–4 mm). Receptacle with short, dense hair. Plants gynodioecious. Flowers white, on short pedicels (0.5 mm), often circumscissile, hairy on outside, inside hairless or sometimes with a few hairs on calyx lobes or in tube. Female tube 3.5 mm long, ovary portion 2.5 mm, calyx lobes 2.2 × 1.7 mm ascendant or opening in salverform fashion; Hermaphrodite tube 5 mm long, ovary portion 2.3 mm, calyx lobes 3 × 2 mm. Anther filaments inserted at mouth of tube; anther dehiscence semi-latorse. Ovary with cluster of short hair at summit. Fruits broad-ovoid, fleshy, red, 5 × 4 mm. Seeds ovoid 3.6 × 2.2 mm.



Manaia, Whangarei Heads. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 16/10/2009, Licence: CC BY.



Note hairs along midrib on abaxial leaf surface. Manaia, Whangarei Heads. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 16/10/2009, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from other *Pimelea* by the erect to suberect growth habit and medium green, rather uniformly sized, keeled leaves with appressed, relatively short hair along the lower leaf margins, midrib, and at the tip. *Pimelea acra* is perhaps most similar to *Pimelea eremitica* which is so far known only from Maunganui Bluff on the west coast of Northland. *Pimelea eremitica* lacks leaf hair and has white to pink fruits. *Pimelea tomentosa* differs from *P. acra* by its longer, thinner, flat, varied-sized leaves with the lower leaf surface vein patterning obvious and by the longer fine hairs, usually spread over the lower leaf surface.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Whangarei Heads (Mt Aubrey, Manaia and Bream Head), Hauturu (Little Barrier Island))

HABITAT

On exposed lava and eroding conglomerate ledges of forested old andesitic or basaltic volcanoes; sometimes on boulder heaps below cliffs.

THREATS

Pimelea acra has been listed as *Pimelea* (b) (AK 165780; Mt Manaia) in de Lange et al. (2004) and de Lange et al. (2009) where it was awarded the status of Naturally Uncommon, qualified RR (Range-Restricted). Currently it is believed secure at its stronghold on Mt Manaia and Bream Head. It is also locally common on Mt Aubrey in one small area. As an unpalatable cliff plant *Pimelea acra* is not directly threatened by browsing animals. It is possible that weeds may be an issue for this species at some sites. Its status on Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) needs further investigation as it is only known there from one 1997 gathering made from Herekohu (The Thumb).

GENUS

Pimelea

FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Pimelea acra C.J.Burrows et de Lange

SYNONYMS

None (first described 2009).

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

July - October

FRUITING

September - December

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Not known from cultivation. Probably easily grown from cuttings.

ETYMOLOGY

pimelea: from Greek *pimelē*, meaning "lard" or "soft fat," presumably referring to the oily seeds or fleshy cotyledons.

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2004 | Range Restricted
[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland”](#) Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Burrows, C.J. 2011: Genus *Pimelea* (Thymelaeaceae) in New Zealand 5. The taxonomic treatment of five endemic species with both adaxial and abaxial leaf hair. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 49: 367–412.
de Lange, P.J.; Norton, D.A.; Heenan, P.B.; Courtney, S.P.; Molloy, B.P.J.; Ogle, C.C.; Rance, B.D.; Johnson, P.N.; Hitchmough, R. 2004: Threatened and uncommon plants of New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42: 45–76.
de Lange, P.J.; Norton, D.A.; Courtney, S.P.; Heenan, P.B.; Barkla, J.W.; Cameron, E.K.; Hitchmough, R.; Townsend, A.J. 2009: Threatened and uncommon plants of New Zealand (2008 revision). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47: 61–96.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 August 2009). Description adapted from Burrows (2009).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-acra/>

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