Pimelea aridula subsp. aridula

COMMON NAMES
pimelea

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RR, Sp
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Bushy small shrub with pairs of greyish hairy pointed leaves inhabiting very dry rocky sites in Central Otago. Twigs hairy. Leaves 8-12mm long by 2-3mm wide, widest at base, pointed, hairy on both surfaces. Flowers white with a hairy pinkish body, in clusters. Fruit dry, enclosing black seed.

Flowers, Flat Top Hill, Alexandra. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

Flat Top Hill, Alexandra. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
A robust, upright, stiff-stemmed shrub, up to 1 m tall. Long-stemmed plants may be fastigiate; short-stemmed plants often have more divergent branches. Branching mainly sympodial. Main stems stiff or flexible. Young branchlets brown, moderately to densely covered with long hair; internodes 0.5-2.0 mm; old stems at the base may be stout (= 10 mm diameter), grey-brown, glabrous. Node buttresses lunate, brown, hairy, often masked by hairs on young stems, moderately conspicuous on leafless stems. Leaves usually decussate, on short, red petioles (0.5 mm), rarely alternate on some young branchlets, ascending, loosely imbricate. Lamina 8-12 × 2-3 mm, medium green, slightly adaxially concave, narrow-ovate, acute, base cuneate, both surfaces often densely covered by long, fine hispid, appressed dull to shining white or yellowish, usually penicillate hairs. Stomata on both leaf surfaces. Inflorescences terminal, 5-10-flowered, sometimes in small clusters. Involucral bracts similar in size to adjacent leaves or slightly wider (8.0-10 × 3.2 mm), partly hiding the flowers. Receptacle densely hairy. Plants gynodioecious. Flowers white, on short pedicels (0.5 mm), tube densely hairy outside, sparsely so inside. Female tube 3.5 mm long, ovary portion 2 mm, calyx lobes 1.5 × 0.6 mm; hermaphrodite tube 6.5 mm long, ovary portion 2.5 mm, calyx lobes 2.5 × 1.5 mm. Anther dehiscence introrse. Ovary hairy from summit to two thirds of the way down. Fruits ovoid, dry, brown, 4.0 × 2.3 mm. Seeds ovoid 4.0 × 2.1 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
Pimelea aridula subsp. aridula is most likely to be confused with P. concinna, a species from which it is allopatrically separated. Both Pimelea form relatively tall shrubs with mostly upright growth habits. From Pimelea concinna, P. aridula subsp. aridula differs by the leaves which are 10-15 mm rather than 5-8 mm long. Pimelea aridula subsp. aridula differs from P. aridula subsp. olga by its allopatric distribution (being geographically confined to Otago), and vegetatively by the taller more robust habit, and by the narrowly ovate leaves whose surfaces are densely covered by appressed dull to shining white or yellowish, long hispid hairs.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. South Island: Waitaki Valley and central Otago, in Kawerau, Clutha, and lower Manuherikia Valleys

HABITAT
Montane to subalpine. Characteristic of schist country where it grows on schist outcrops and rocky hillsides especially on soils derived from schist

THREATS
Field surveys indicate that Pimelea aridula subsp. aridula populations mostly comprise mature plants and at few places are seedlings and juveniles seen. For this reason P. aridula (at species rank) was listed as “Declining” by de Lange et al. (2009). Despite the species recircumscription to comrpise two subspecies by Burrows (2011) the comments he offers in his paper for P. aridula subsp. aridula remain unchallenged here.

GENUS
Pimelea

FAMILY
Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY
Pimelea aridula Cheeseman subsp. aridula

SYNONYMS
Pimelea lyallii var. sericea Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October - February

FRUITING
January - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Does best in a free draining, sunny site, planted within a rich. fertile soil. Dislikes competition from taller plants and humidity. Will not long tolerate being shaded out. An excellent pot plant or small shrub for a rockery.

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 – Declining | Qualifiers: RR, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RR, Sp
2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, NR, NStr, PF, RF, Sp, TL Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025” Jarvie S 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.; 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 September 2011). Description from Burrows (2011)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Pimelea aridula subsp. aridula Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-aridula-subsp-aridula/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-aridula-subsp-aridula/

PDF DATE

08 June 2026