

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.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A robust, upright, stiff-stemmed shrub, up to 1 m tall. Long-stemmed plants may be fastigate; 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.



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



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

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 comprise 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

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<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/>

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