

Pimelea carnosa

COMMON NAMES

pinātoro, pimelea

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Very low-growing sprawling shrub with creeping greyish-haired twigs bearing overlapping pairs of thick fleshy oval leaves, clusters of small white flowers, and white fruit inhabiting coastal areas probably throughout. Leaves slightly ridged underneath, 3.5-4.9mm long by 1.5-3.5mm wide.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A small to medium-sized shrub, prostrate or pendent on banks and cliffs; stems slender to stout, flexible, up to 70 cm long. Branching sympodial and lateral, with some short shoots. Branchlets light brown, moderately densely covered by short, stiff, greyish-white hair. Internodes 1–2 mm long. Older stems slightly hairy to glabrate, light-brown to dark grey. Node buttresses short (0.2 mm), dark brown, lunate, masked by hair on young stems, not prominent on leafless stems. Leaves decussate, crowded on young branchlets, imbricate, ascendant, may become patent later, on short (0.5 mm) red petioles. Lamina broad-ovate or broad-elliptic, 3.5–4.9 × 1.5–3.5 mm, glabrous, glaucous, thick, often fleshy, adaxially concave to slightly keeled, midvein evident abaxially, obtuse, base cuneate, sometimes truncate. Stomata abundant on adaxial side, none or rare on abaxial side. Inflorescences 4–6-flowered, terminal on branchlets. Involucral bracts 4, similar in size to adjacent leaves or larger (5.5 × 3.8 mm). Receptacles moderately hairy. Pedicels 0.2 mm. Plants gynodioecious. Flowers white, fragrant, moderately densely hairy on outside of tube and calyx lobes; inside hairless. Calyx lobes open in salverform fashion. Female tube 3 mm, ovary portion 2.2 mm, calyx lobes 1.8 × 1.4 mm; hermaphrodite tube 4.2 mm long, ovary portion 2.5 mm, calyx lobes 2.0 × 1.8 mm. Anther dehiscence semi-latrose. Ovary sparsely hairy at summit and to one-quarter of the way down. Fruits broad ovoid, fleshy, white, opaque, 5.0 × 3.8 mm. Seeds broad ovoid 2.8 × 2 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

P. carnosa is easily recognised by the extremely fleshy, broad-elliptic to broad-ovate, keeled, imbricate (overlapping), ascendant leaves, lunate node buttresses, and very hairy young stems. It is perhaps closest to, and has often been confused with *P. urvilliana* which differs by the bright white, long, dense indumentum of the stem internodes (rather than the grey-white, short, moderately dense hairs of the stem internodes of *P. carnosa*) and by having notably less fleshy, more widely spaced, elliptic or ovate leaves.



Portland Island. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 17/12/2015, Licence: CC BY.



Pihama Coast, South Taranaki. Photographer: Bill Clarkson, Date taken: 05/10/2011, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Three Kings (Manawha Tawhi), North and South Islands to about Otago. All recent South Island records come from Nelson, North-west Nelson to about Buller and in the east along the Marlborough coast to Ward and at Kaitorete Spit.

HABITAT

Coastal: Mostly on cliffs and banks, sometimes on dunes; commonly in short turf on wind- and spray-swept cliff tops together with a range of halophytic plants.

GENUS

Pimelea

FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Pimelea carnos C.J.Burrows

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 2009)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September – April

FRUITING

November – June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings and rooted pieces. Seed is difficult to germinate. Best grown in a well drained soil in full sun. An excellent plant for the rockery.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

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

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

[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.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CI, DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, RR, Sp 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. 2009: Genus *Pimelea* (Thymelaeaceae) in New Zealand 2. The endemic *Pimelea prostrata* and *Pimelea urvilliana* species complexes. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47: 163–229.

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet 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-carnosa/>

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27 May 2026