

Pimelea nitens subsp. aspera

COMMON NAMES

pimelea

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, RR

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low growing sprawling shrub with hairy twigs bearing pairs of slightly overlapping oval leaves that have slightly spread hairs on the underside, hairy white flowers and red fruit inhabiting ultramafic area of the northern South Island. Leaves 5-8mm long by 2-3mm wide, hairs often yellowish and crinkled.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Robust, much-branched, procumbent, decumbent or sometimes semi-upright shrub up to 250 mm tall; stems usually stiff, up to 400 mm long. Branching mainly sympodial. Young stems brown, densely covered in short, white to greyish or yellowish, fine to coarse, appressed to ascending hairs. Internodes 1-2 mm densely hairy. Older stems thick (to 12 mm), glabrate, dark grey-brown to black. Node buttresses lunate, 0.2 mm long, smooth, brown, sometimes prominent on leafless stems. Leaves decussate, ascending, loosely imbricate, on short (0.5 mm), red petioles. Lamina 5-8 × 2-3 mm, medium to dark green, variable, mostly elliptic to broad-elliptic (rarely ovate to broad-ovate), slightly keeled; tip sharply acute to blunt; base cuneate; abaxial surface densely to moderately densely covered by long, ascending, dull-white, sometimes yellowish, straight (sometimes curled hairs); stomata on both adaxial and abaxial surfaces. Inflorescences terminal, 3-7-flowered. Involucral bracts wider than adjacent leaves (5.0-6.0 × 3.5-3.9 mm). Receptacles with dense short hairs. Plants gynodioecious. Flowers white, on short (0.3 mm) pedicels, densely covered outside with short hairs; inside hairless. Female tube to 3.5 mm long, ovary portion 2 mm, calyx lobes 1.5 × 1.0 mm; hermaphrodite tube to 6 mm long, ovary portion 2 mm, calyx lobes 2.0 × 1.5 mm. Anther dehiscence introrse. Ovary with a cluster of long hairs at summit and sparse, short hairs to base. Fruits ovoid, fleshy, red, 5.0 × 3.5 mm. Seeds 2.5 × 1.8 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Pimelea nitens subsp. *aspera* is distinguished from subsp. *nitens* by the dark grey-brown to black colour of the older stems, elliptic to broad-elliptic (rarely ovate to broad-ovate) leaves with mostly blunt apices, which are abaxially furnished with longer, mostly ascending, dull white to yellowish straight or curled hairs. *Pimelea mesoa* subsp. *macra* which is endemic to the Cobb Valley in western Nelson could be confused with *P. nitens* subsp. *aspera* from which it differs by its larger size and usually prostrate growth habit.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (D'Urville Island, eastern Nelson including the Richmond Range)

HABITAT

Lowland to alpine. *Pimelea nitens* subsp. *aspera* is almost exclusively tied to ultramafic substrates and the soils derived from these (*Pimelea nitens* subsp. *aspera* is also occasionally found on sandstone). In these places it grows amongst low sparse and in open ground within tall tussock grassland.



THREATS

Burrows (2011) offers no meaningful information about this species threat status merely noting (p. 89) that recent surveys had found that *Pimelea nitens* subsp. *aspera* was “never abundant”. Based on its known distribution, main substrate preferences and apparent ecology *P. nitens* subsp. *aspera* is quite probably a naturally uncommon, biological sparse plant. However, until exact numbers of plants become known a full assessment is clearly impossible. In any case as no attempt was made by Burrows (2011) to provide a threat status using the New Zealand Threat Classification System (see Townsend et al. 2008) at this stage an interim threat assessment of “Data Deficient” is probably appropriate.

GENUS

Pimelea

FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Pimelea nitens subsp. *aspera* C.J.Burrows et Courtney

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 2011)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

December - February

FRUITING

Unknown

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown. Probably easily grown from semi-hard and hardwood cuttings.

ETYMOLOGY

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

aspera: From the Latin *asper* ‘rough’, meaning rough or covered with hard short rigid points

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2009 | Data Deficient

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Burrows, C.J. 2011: Genus *Pimelea* (Thymelaeaceae) in New Zealand 4. The taxonomic treatment of ten endemic abaxially hairy-leaved species. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 49: 41–106.

Townsend, A.J.; de Lange, P.J.; Norton, D.A.; Molloy, J.; Miskelly, C.; Duffy, C. 2008: The New Zealand Threat Classification System manual. Wellington, Department of Conservation.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange (1 May 2011) adapted from Burrows (2011).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-nitens-subsp-aspera/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-nitens-subsp-aspera/>

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25 May 2026