

Pimelea oreophila subsp. lepta

COMMON NAMES

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

Low-growing spreading shrub with hairy branches to 50cm bearing pairs of narrow pointed leaves that are hairy underneath and with a small bump at the tip (lens needed) and with hairy white flowers and red or orange fruit inhabiting the southeastern South Island. Leaves 4-8mm long by 2-4mm wide.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Procumbent, trailing shrub, with few to many, slender (2.0–2.5 mm), brown, flexible young stems densely covered in long, fine hairs, internodes 2–4 mm, node buttresses lunate, or extending the whole length of the internodes, with hairy strips between, sometimes moderately prominent on leafless stems. Older stems dark brown, up to 3 mm diameter, up to 500 mm long, occasionally with adventitious roots, sometimes climbing in upright shrubs. Reduced in stature on exposed sites with rocky substrates, sometimes forming short-stemmed, appressed rosettes. Branching mainly sympodial. Young stems brown, moderately densely covered in short or moderately long, white, grey or sometimes yellowish appressed hair cover; older stems darker brown, glabrate. Internodes of young stems 1–5mm long. Node buttresses lunate to elongate, or sometimes extending the full length of internodes, with bands of hair between; usually not very prominent on leafless stems. Leaves decussate, on short (0.5–1.0 mm), often red petioles, ascending at first, usually becoming patent, often with a distichous appearance on prostrate stems. Lamina 4–8 × 2–4 mm, glaucous or medium to dark green, elliptic or ovate flat or keeled, mid-vein evident; tip acute but usually blunt-pointed, sometimes obtuse; base cuneate; abaxial hairs long, dull white to yellowish, usually moderately dense especially at margins and forming a distinct coma at the tip, often becoming glabrous as leaves age; stomata on both adaxial and abaxial surfaces. Inflorescences terminal, 5–15-flowered, receptacle densely covered in short hairs. Involucral bracts 4, the same size as ordinary leaves, or larger (6 × 4 mm). Plants gynodioecious. Flowers white, fragrant, on short pedicels (0.3 mm) densely covered with short hairs outside; inside hairless. Female tube 2.5–4.0 mm long, ovary portion 3 mm, calyx lobes 1–2 × 1 mm; hermaphrodite tube 4–6 mm long, ovary portion 2 mm, calyx lobes 2.0–3.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm. Anther dehiscence introrse. Ovary with dense clump of short or long hairs at summit. Fruits ovoid, fleshy, orange or red, 4 × 3 mm. Seeds ovoid 2.7 × 2.3 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from the other subspecies of *Pimelea oreophila* by the short or long leaves whose abaxial surface is either moderately densely covered in long hairs and by the consistent presence of an apical coma. *Pimelea oreophila* subsp. *lepta* is also recognised in the field by its geographic restriction to Southland, Otago (east of the lakes), and southern Canterbury (where it is scarce).

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (southern Canterbury, north, east and central Otago, Southland, eastern Fiordland)

HABITAT

Montane to alpine. In tall and short tussock grassland, open shrubland and on peat along bog margins. Mainly associated with schist substrates but also on sandstone, plutonics, ultramafics, limestone.



THREATS

Probably not threatened. However as *Pimelea oreophila* subsp. *lepta* was not assessed by Burrows (2011) using the New Zealand Threat Classification Manual (Townsend et al. 2008) it has no valid threat assessment. So at this stage it seems best to recommend a interim threat assessment of "Data Deficient".

GENUS

Pimelea

FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Pimelea oreophila subsp. *lepta* C.J.Burrows

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 2011)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September - February

FRUITING

October - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings. Does best in a well drained soil and planted in a sunny situation (such as in a rockery or pot)

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.

oreophila: Mountain lover

NVS CODE

PIMOSL

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Data Deficient

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: 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 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 (28 April 2011). Description adapted from Burrows (2011).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-oreophila-subsp-lepta/>

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