

# Pimelea oreophila subsp. oreophila

## 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 2.5-3.5 mm thick and to 50 cm, bearing pairs of narrow pointed leaves that are sparsely hairy underneath, and with hairy white flowers and red or orange fruit. Mostly inhabits the wetter southern South Island. Leaves 4-8 mm long by 2-4 mm wide.

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Procumbent, trailing shrub, with few to many, moderately thick (2.5–3.5 mm), flexible light brown young stems these covered invested with a moderate cover of short, appressed hairs; internodes 2.5–5.0 mm, node buttresses usually lunate, sometimes elongate. Older stems up to 6.0 mm diameter, 100–500 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, usually elliptic, sometimes ovate, adaxially concave and slightly keeled, mid-vein evident; tip acute but usually blunt-pointed, sometimes obtuse; base cuneate; abaxially bearing sparse, short, white to dull-white hairs along lamina margins, mid-veins and tips; with or without an apical coma, 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.



Cobb Dam, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Pimelea oreophila. Photographer: Sandra Wotherspoon, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Recognised by the stems which are 2.5–3.5 mm diameter, and elliptic, slightly keeled leaves whose abaxial surface leaf margins, mid-vein and apex are sparsely covered in short, sparse often caducous abaxial hairs. Further *Pimelea oreophila* subsp. *oreophila* is confined to the Southern Alps, northern Canterbury, and from Westland to southern Fiordland.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Canterbury, Westland, Otago (mostly western but also sparse in central areas), western Southland and Fiordland

## HABITAT

Montane to alpine, in open forest near the treeline, in tall and short tussock grassland associated with a wide range of other small grasses, forbs, dwarf shrubs and some medium height shrubs. Usually above the treeline but also at lower levels (500 m or less) in places where frosts are severe in valley floors and where forest has been removed by fire.

## GENUS

Pimelea

## FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

## AUTHORITY

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

## 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)

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**oreophila:** Mountain lover

## NVS CODE

PIMOSO

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[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.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange (28 April 2011). Description adapted from Burrows (2011).

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

08 June 2026