

# Pimelea orthia subsp. orthia

## COMMON NAMES

pimelea

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: Sp

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub to 90cm tall with many erect hairy branches bearing pairs of blue-green leaves and hairy white flowers and white fruit inhabiting the upper North Island. Leaves 5-8mm long by 2-3mm wide.

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Fastigiate to bushy, few to much-branched shrubs, up to 900 mm tall, often shorter, with relatively few, stiffly erect or divergent to prostrate, straight main branches and thin, usually ascendant, lateral branches of varied form. On different plants these may be short and straight, long and straight, or short and repeatedly sympodially branched. Young branchlets clad in sparse to moderately dense, appressed, grey-white, short, silky hair; internodes 0.5–2.5 mm, older stems glabrous, grey or brown (bark wrinkled on dried specimens). Node buttresses brown, extending part way down or the full length of the internode, not very prominent on leafless stems. Leaves decussate, ascendant, then patent or deflexed, on short (0.5 mm) red petioles, often persistent. Lamina flat to slightly keeled, relatively thin, 5–8 × 2–3 mm (smaller on lateral branchlets), elliptic or ovate, glabrous, glaucous or pale green, acute, but tip blunt, or obtuse. Stomata abundant on adaxial and abaxial sides. Inflorescences terminal on main stems or lateral branchlets, 2–12-flowered, loose. Involucral bracts 4, similar in size to adjacent leaves or slightly wider (7 × 3 mm), partly hiding the flowers. Receptacles moderately hairy. Plants gynodioecious. Flowers white on short pedicels (0.8 mm); outside of tube and calyx lobes moderately hairy; inside hairy in upper tube and ovary portion. Female tube 2 mm long, ovary portion wrinkled, 1.7 mm long, calyx lobes 1.2 × 1.0 mm; hermaphrodite tube 3.2 mm long, ovary portion 1.5 mm, calyx lobes 2.7 × 1.4 mm. Anther dehiscence semilatrorse. Ovary summit sparsely hairy. Fruits fleshy, ovoid, white, opaque, 5 × 2.9 mm. Seeds broadovoid 2.1 × 1.4 mm. Crest thin.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Pimelea orthia* is part of the *P. prostrata* complex. Burrows (2009) allies it with *P. xenica* and *P. actea*; species from which it is distinguished by its much-branched mostly erect growth form. Within *P. orthia* Burrows (2009) recognises two subspecies of which subsp. *protea* is not accepted here because the distinctions offered are not maintained in cultivation, they are seen also in other populations of subsp. *orthia*, and the claims of ecological differences between both subspecies are incorrect. Further investigation into the status of subsp. *protea* is required.



Cable Bay. Photographer: Kevin Matthews, Date taken: 01/11/2009, Licence: CC BY-NC.



North Cape, Te Pahi. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/02/2011, Licence: CC BY.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island: North Auckland (scattered localities from Mangonui to Auckland City), South Auckland-King Country, Coromandel Peninsula, eastern Bay of Plenty (Whakatane, Kohi Point, Ohiwa Harbour); East Cape – Gisborne (near Ngatapa), Mahia.

## HABITAT

Coastal to lowland. In open scrubland and grassland overlying leached, infertile soils, or on dunes and rock outcrops.

## THREATS

Probably highly threatened but until Burrows (2009) established the exact taxonomic status of this plant it has been widely confused with a range of other members of the *P. prostrata* complex. Recent (2000+) records have come from near Mangawhai, near Whakatane, Ohiwa Harbour and at Mahia Peninsula. Most of these sites are roadside or trackside habitats vulnerable to clearance. However, a definitive threat status cannot be given until better information is obtained, until such time this species probably warrants the current threat listing awarded it by de Lange et al. (2009) where it is listed under Appendix 2, as Data Deficient under the illegitimate name *Pimelea prostrata* var. *erecta* Cheeseman

## GENUS

*Pimelea*

## FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Pimelea orthia* C.J.Burrows et Thorsen

## SYNONYMS

*Pimelea laevigata* var. *erecta*, *Pimela prostrata* var. *erecta* nom. illeg.; *Pimelea orthia* subsp. *protea* C.J.Burrows et Thorsen

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

September - May

## FRUITING

November - July

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## 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

## 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 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: Dp, Sp

2009 | Data Deficient

2004 | Data Deficient

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, EF, PF, RR, TL 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.

## 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.

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.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285-309

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (13 December 2009). Description adapted from Burrows (2009).

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026