

Pimelea sericeovillosa subsp. alta

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 hairy pointed leaves, hairy white flowers inhabiting the Pisa Range and possibly nearby. Leaf dimensions unknown, hairs denser on underside. Fruit unknown.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A low, much-branched, dull-green loose cushion-forming shrublet to 50 × 250 mm. with brown, clustered, appressed, leafy, densely villous young branchlets, and with older, gnarled, leafless stems often visible (these often leafless and glabrous, dark brown to black, often partly buried by windblown silt or sand). Internode length 0.3-0.6 mm. Branching mainly sympodial and radiating from a stout main stem up to 15 mm in diameter. Node buttresses lunate, dark brown, masked by hairs on young stems, not prominent on leafless branchlets. Leaves decussate, ascending, imbricate, sessile or with very short petioles (0.2 mm). Lamina medium to pale green, elliptic to oblong, 2.2-4.0 × 1.0-1.3 mm, adaxially concave, mid-vein not evident, abaxial surface very densely covered with straight, grey-white, moderately long hairs; adaxial surface sparsely hairy, sometimes glabrous, obtuse, base cuneate, stomata on both adaxial and abaxial surfaces. Inflorescences terminal, with 1 or 2, sometimes 3, flowers. Involucral bracts 4, the same size as, or slightly wider than adjacent leaves (2.3 × 1.5 mm). Receptacle usually with abundant long hairs. Plants gynodioecious. Flowers 1-2-3 per inflorescence, white, on very short (0.1 mm) pedicels, very hairy outside, inside hairless. Female tube 2.5 mm long, ovary portion 2 mm, calyx lobes 1.0-1.2 × 0.5 mm; hermaphrodite tube 3-4 mm long, ovary portion 2 mm, calyx lobes 1.5 × 0.8-1.0 mm. Anther dehiscence introrse. Ovary with dense short hairs on summit, less dense to half way down. Fruits not seen.

SIMILAR TAXA

Resembling subsp. sericeovillosa from which it differs by its allopatric distribution, more open (loose) cushion forming growth habit, dull-green colour, and leaf investiture comprised solely of long straight hairs

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island, Pisa Range

HABITAT

Subalpine to alpine. Usually in open fell-field on mountain tops, ridge crests and in open stonefields. occasionally found at lower levels in short short-tussock grassland.

THREATS

See comments about the "Conservation Status" opinions and their validity as offered by Burrows (2011) under the Fact Sheet for *Pimelea sericeovillosa* subsp. sericeovillosa. As *Pimelea* (d) (CHR 472016; Pisa) *Pimelea sericeovillosa* subsp. alta was listed by de Lange et al. (2009; p. 91) as Taxonomically Indeterminate/Naturally Uncommon. This assessment may still be appropriate as it was based on critical field data obtained by Department of Conservation Staff surveying the Pisa Range. However, due to the recircumscription of *P. sericeovillosa* by Burrows (2011) and comments regarding possible introgression between subsp. alta and *P. aridulla* and *P. oreophila* (comments which seem to be solely based on limited observations), this assessment may need to change.



GENUS

Pimelea

FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Pimelea sericeovillosa subsp. *alta* C.J.Burrows

SYNONYMS

None first described in 2011

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Pimelea sericeovillosa subsp. *alta* was listed by de Lange et al. (2009; p. 91) as Taxonomically Indeterminate/Naturally Uncommon as *Pimelea* (d) (CHR 472016; Pisa).

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - January

FRUITING

Unknown

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings but difficult to maintain in cultivation. Prefers a moist free-draining soil, planted in full sun. Dislikes humidity, shade and poor drainage.

ETYMOLOGY

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

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR

2004 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NS, NStr, RE, RR, Sp, St, 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 5. The taxonomic treatment of five endemic species with both adaxial and abaxial leaf hair. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 49: 367-412.

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.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (29 September 2011). Description adapted from Burrows (2011).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

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25 May 2026