Pimelea sericeovillosa subsp. pulvinaris

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, PF
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Rounded low hairy cushions bearing hairy upward pointing leaves small hairy white flowers and yellow or orange fruit inhabiting inland Canterbury and Otago. 1–2 flowers per twig tip.

Pimelea pulvinaris Mt Iron. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

Pimelea pulvinaris Mt Iron. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Low, compact, much-branched, pale green cushion-forming shrublet to 50 × 250 mm. with brown, tightly packed, appressed, leafy, densely villous young branchlets (older stems usually not visible but retaining dead leaves which cover branchlets inside the cushion). **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 densely covered with straight, white or greyish-white, moderately long hairs; adaxial surface moderately densely hairy, sometimes glabrate (the youngest leaves have more or less dense adaxial vesture), 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) 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** ovoid, fleshy, yellow or pale orange 2.5–3.0 × 1.8–2.0 mm, seeds narrow-ovoid 2.0–2.2 × 1.0–1.3 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from the other *P. sericeovillosa* subspecies by its tight, cushion forming habit, pale green colour, restriction to valley and basin floor locations, and by being geographically confined to Mid Canterbury, South Canterbury and western Central Otago.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Mid Canterbury (Mackenzie Basin), south Canterbury and western central Otago; formerly in the lower Waitaki valley near Kurow).

HABITAT
Lowland to subalpine. In valley and basin floors occupying dry, windswept places, usually with stony substrates and fine-textured, loess-derived matrix, within short vegetation cover. Often on moraine crests, as well as alluvial fans and river terraces.

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 *P. pulvinaris* this subspecies was listed as "Declining" by de Lange et al. (2009). This assessment is probably still appropriate but due to the recircumscription of *P. sericeovillosa* to comprise three subspecies this assessment may need to change.

GENUS
Pimelea

FAMILY
Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY
Pimelea sericeovillosa subsp. pulvinaris (C.J.Burrows) C.J.Burrows

SYNONYMS
Pimelea pulvinaris C.J.Burrows

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–January

FRUITING
December–May

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.

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.
pulvinaris: From the Latin pulvinar 'a cushion' and -aris 'resembling', meaning resembling a cushio i.e. convex or or rather flattened

NVS CODE
PIMSSP

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP
2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: NR, NStr, PF, RF, RR, CD 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 CJ. 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(3)*: 367–412. https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2011.577437.
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).

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-sericeovillosa-subsp-pulvinaris/

PDF DATE

27 May 2026