

# Pimelea telura

## COMMON NAMES

Three Kings pimelea

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Small shrub to 1m tall with erect white-hairy branches bearing pairs of green fleshy poking out leaves, hairy white flowers and white fruit inhabiting the Three Kings Islands. Leaves 8-14mm long by 3-6mm, cupped, leaves underneath flowers larger. Flowers with both male and female parts.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrubs, to 1 × 1 m with thick, rather stiff stems, decumbent to suberect or erect. Branches stout, numerous, sympodial. Young branchlets densely covered with appressed, short, white, villous hair, older stems less hairy, pale brown maturing grey. Node buttresses short (0.2 mm), lunate, hidden by hair on young branchlets, prominent after leaf fall. Internode length 1.5–3 mm. Leaves decussate, crowded on young branchlets, on short, brown petioles (0.5–0.8 mm), ascendant, becoming patent or deflexed. Lamina glabrous, glaucous to yellow-green glaucescent, 8–14 × 3–6 mm, leathery, flat to slightly adaxially concave, to cymbiform, ovate to narrow ovate or broad elliptic to narrow elliptic, acute to slightly acuminate (but blunt-pointed), base cuneate. Stomata only on adaxial side. Inflorescences crowded, compact, 3–8-flowered. Involucral bracts 4, ovate to elliptic 8–12 × 4–5 mm. Receptacle very hairy. Plants bisexual. Flowers creamy white, on very short pedicels (0.3 mm). Outside of tube and calyx lobes densely covered with hair; inside hairless or sometimes with sparse hair; tube to 5 mm long, ovary portion 4 mm long, with vertical “stripes” of hair when dry, calyx lobes 3 × 2 mm. Anthers yellow. Ovary summit with dense short hair, extending two-thirds of the way to the base. Fruits ovoid, fleshy, creamy white (sometimes basally flushed pink), 6 × 3 mm. The hypanthium breaks off, irregularly, near the base as the fruits ripen. Seed broad-pyriform, with very thin crest, 3.5 × 2.0 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from all other New Zealand *Pimelea* by the larger size, robust growth habit, large, thick leaves, dense hair covering on branchlets, and bisexual, cream-coloured flowers with vertical “stripes” of hair on the ovary portion.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Three Kings Islands (Manawa Tawhi (Great Island));



South West Island, December 1995.  
Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



South West Island, December 1995.  
Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## HABITAT

On Basalt cliffs, rubble slopes and deeply weather basaltic soils. Usually in sparsely vegetated sites or in low windswept scrub dominated by kahikatoa (*Leptospermum scoparium* var. *incanum*), *Hebe insularis*, *taupata* (*Coprosma repens*), *Disphyma australe* subsp. *australe*, and ferns.

## THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, range-restricted, often sparsely distributed island endemic under no obvious threats. At a few places, such as Bald Hill, Great Island, hybrids between *P. telura* and a member of the *P. urvilleana* complex have been found. This is one of the few places where the distribution of these two species overlaps on the Three Kings archipelago. Previously recorded as *Pimelea* aff. *tomentosa* (c) (AK 228145; Three Kings) in de Lange et al., 2004, Threatened and uncommon plants on New Zealand, *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42: 45-76.

## GENUS

*Pimelea*

## FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Pimelea telura* C.J.Burrows

## SYNONYMS

None (first described in 2008)

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October – July

## FRUITING

October – July

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Not known from cultivation. All past attempts to cultivate this species have eventually failed. Though easily grown from cuttings, and sometime seed, *P. telura* has proved fickle in cultivation and plants rarely persist for longer than one - two years.

## 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.

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, OL

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR, Sp

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Burrows, C.J. 2008: Genus Pimelea (Thymelaeaceae) in New Zealand 1. The taxonomic treatment of seven endemic, glabrous-leaved species. New Zealand Journal of Botany 46: 127-176.

## ATTRIBUTION

Description based on: Burrows (2008).

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026