Pimelea tomentosa

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: PD
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Shrub with erect hairy branches bearing pairs of pointed green thin leaves that are hairy underneath, hairy white flowers and black fruit inhabiting the south to the northern South Island. Leaves 15-25mm long by 3-5mm wide, widest towards base. Flowers cause stem to branch.



Pimelea tomentosa. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

FLOWER COLOURS
White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
An erect, grey-green, leafy shrub up to 1 m tall. Branches are slender and straight, with prominent leaf scars. Bark orange-brown. Young branchlets have whitish hairs. The grey-green, soft lance-shaped leaves are up to 25 mm long, with pale silky hairs on their undersides. The black fleshy fruits are very conspicuous, terminating the branch ends wherever flowers have been present.



Pimelea tomentosa fruit. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Pimelea prostrata is a common component of coastal cliffs and shrubland vegetation. It has several variable forms but the leaves are smaller (3 to 6 byfn1 to 3 mm) than of P. tomentosa, its habit prostrate to sprawling and it has smaller, less conspicuous white fleshy fruits. Sand daphne (Pimelea arenaria) has a similar habit but only occurs in dunes and dune hollows, has shorter, more rounded leaves than P. tomentosa and smaller red fruits.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic to New Zealand, occurring throughout the North Island and northern South Island.

HABITAT
Open cliff tops, in scrub, frost flats, track sides and other seral habitats.

THREATS
Habitat loss through development, land clearance, succession, track maintenance and competition with weeds.

GENUS
Pimelea

FAMILY
Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY
Pimelea tomentosa (J.R.Forst. et G.Forst.) Druce

TAXONOMIC NOTES
New Zealand Pimelea urgently require a full taxonomic revision using modern techniques. The treatments of Burrows (2009a, b et seq.) offer a useful foundation for further revision. Luckily Pimelea tomentosa is a well marked species and is not likely to require taxonomic adjustment.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Flowering specimens may be seen throughout the year.

FRUITING
Fruiting specimens may be seen throughout the year.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Very easy to grow from fresh fruit and semi-hardwood cuttings. This species forms an attractive small shrub and is tolerant of a wide range of soil types and conditions from drought prone sites to frosty situations. It does best in infertile soils.

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

NVS CODE
PIMTOM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, PD
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: PD
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: PD
2004 | Serious Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, DE, PF, RF Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland” Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR DPS DPT Sp Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau” Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington.
Burrows, C.J. 2009: Genus Pimelea (Thymelaeaceae) in New Zealand 3. The taxonomic treatment of six endemic hairy-leaved species. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 47*: 325-354.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 August 2003. Description modified from Allan (1961) but see also Burrows (2009)

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-tomentosa/

PDF DATE

25 August 2026