Pimelea urvilleana subsp. urvilleana

COMMON NAMES
pinātoro

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Very low-growing sprawling shrub with densely white-hairy twigs bearing clustered pairs of thick blue-green leaves, hairy white flowers and white fruit inhabiting coastal areas south to Nelson. Leaves 3-6mm long by 2-3mm, underside shiny.



Kaihoka, Golden Bay. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FLOWER COLOURS
White



Little Bay, Coromandel. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Date taken: 01/02/2011, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
A small to medium-sized prostrate shrub; stems moderately stout but flexible, up to 300 mm long. Branching notably sympodial with some laterals. Branchlets densely covered by matted white hair. Internodes 1–3 mm long. Older stems slightly hairy, grey-brown. Node buttresses smooth, black, lunate, masked by hair on young stems. Leaves decussate but usually distichously arranged, ascendant on youngest branchlets, patent later. Lamina 3–6 × 2–3 mm, thick, narrow-elliptic to ovate, flat or slightly keeled. Tip usually obtuse. Stomata abundant adaxially, none or rare abaxially. Abaxial surface glistens. Inflorescences 5–7-flowered compact, receptacles very hairy. Involucral bracts 4, similar in size to adjacent leaves. Plants gynodioecious. Flowers small, white, outside very hairy, inside sparsely hairy in upper tube. Calyx lobes opening in salverform fashion or ascendant. Female tube 1.8 mm long, ovary portion wrinkled, 1.5 mm, calyx lobes 1.2 × 1 mm. hermaphrodite tube 3.8 mm long, ovary portion 2.5 mm, calyx lobes 2 × 1.5 mm. Anther dehiscence semi-latrorse. Ovary with a tuft of long hair on summit. Fruits white, fleshy, opaque 5 × 3.5 mm. Seeds broad ovoid 3 × 1.8 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
See Pimelea urvilleana subsp. nesica. Description from: 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.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North Island: widespread, often common from Three Kings, throughout coastal Northland, thence mostly easterly south to the Wairarapa and south Taranaki. South Island: Tasman Bay (Astrolabe Passage), Marlborough Sounds.

HABITAT
Coastal. Rock outcrops, cliffs, sometimes in scrub.

THREATS
See notes

GENUS
Pimelea

FAMILY
Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY
Pimelea urvilleana A.Rich. subsp. urvilleana

SYNONYMS
Pimelea urvilliana A.Rich. subsp. urvilliana other. var.; Pimelea urvilliana A.Rich. orth. var.; Pimelea prostrata var. urvilleana (A. Rich.)

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Burrows (2009) offers a very clear (for the first time ever for this species) interpretation of *Pimelea urvilleana*, and as such splits it into two subspecies. Based on that interpretation he argues that *P. urvilleana* subsp. *urvilleana* is close to if not already extinct. However, it is stated that the genome survives in hybrids. No evidence is provided to back that claim up beyond empirical observations and some minor morphological assessments of herbarium material. Subsequent field work has shown that *Pimelea urvilleana* subsp. *urvilleana* is widespread, often common and not threatened. The distinctions offered for *Pimelea urvilleana* subsp. *nesica* seem dubious especially as specimens with characters of both subspecies can be found on the same plant.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Unknown. Burrows (2009) states: Summer

FRUITING
Unknown.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Probably easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings and rooted pieces. As with other pimelea seed is probably difficult to germinate.

ETYMOLOGY
pimelea: from Greek pimelē, meaning “lard” or “soft fat,” presumably referring to the oily seeds or fleshy cotyledons.
urvilleana: After D’Urville Island, which is named in honour of Jules Sébastien César Dumont d’Urville (23 May 1790 - 8 May 1842) - a French explorer, naval officer and rear admiral, who explored the south and western Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica.

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Data Deficient
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, 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 Not Threatened 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

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.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (17 October 2009). Description adapted from Burrows (2009).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 August 2026