

Pittosporum pimeleoides subsp. pimeleoides

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Rare much-branched shrub with whorls of narrow leaves and pale red-striped yellow flowers and 6-12mm long pointed capsules inhabiting lowland Northland. Twigs thin. Leaves 9-30mm long by 4.5-13mm wide. Fruit splitting into two to show the black sticky seeds in orange pith.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Spindly to much branched, erect to semi-erect, gynodioecious shrub 0.6-2.5 m tall. Trunk 1 or more arising from the ground, these and the branches typically rather slender, wiry, pliant, coloured brown; branchlets similar but at first densely clad in greyish-white to brown tomentum becoming glabrous with age. Leaves alternate, often in distinct whorls (semi-verticillate). Petioles up to 5 mm long, hairy. Lamina 5-50 x 3-5(-10), pale green, red-green or dark green above, paler beneath, linear-oblong, linear, oblanceolate or elliptic (very rarely broadly elliptic), apex acuminate or obtuse, base attenuate, margins entire or finely crenulate, surfaces sparsely hairy with ciliolate margins when young, becoming glabrous with age, coriaceous. Flowers usually terminal, 4-12 fascicled, female flowers often solitary. Pedicels 2-9 mm, filiform, puberulent, accrescent in fruit, subtended by a whorl of leaves and several 2-3 mm long, caducous, glabrous, ciliolate bud scales. Sepals 2.5-4 x 0.5-1 mm, linear, acuminate, glabrous. Petals 7-9 mm, yellow with a central or margin red stripe, rarely completely yellow or cream, linear, acuminate, fused in a tube to about the middle, then spreading and reflexed. Stamens 2.5-6.5 mm, anthers 0.5-2 mm. Ovary 1-2 x 1-1.5 mm, villous, style 1.5-3.5 mm, Stigma capitate, 2-lobed or truncate. Capsules 2-valved, 6-12 x 4-6 mm, green at first brown when mature, ovoid, acuminate, coriaceous, initially covered in long grey hairs otherwise glabrate. Mucilage yellow to dark orange. Seeds 5-18, glossy black, of irregular shape.

SIMILAR TAXA

The combination of the small erect to semi-erect shrub habit, narrow oblanceolate, linear-lanceolate to linear leaves and yellow and red-striped flowers are unique to this species (and subspecies). It could be confused with subsp. majus but that is an ultramafic endemic of the North Cape Peninsula with a trailing, decumbent, prostrate growth form, much broader elliptic leaves and longer sepals (4.5-5 cf 2.5-4 mm) and petals (7.5-9 cf. 11-11.5 mm).



Kerikeri. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Opito Bay, Bay of Islands. December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic, New Zealand, North Island, mainly in the east from Karikari Peninsula south to about Whangarei in the east and Waipoua Forest in the west.

HABITAT

Usually associated with kauri (*Agathis australis*) forest, often in secondary regrowth, along ridge lines and in shrublands caused by past fires, slips or other natural or human-induced disturbance mechanisms. Also found in coastal shrubland, or in gumland scrub. Very rarely it grows in riparian vegetation, in which case it occupies sites prone to frequent flooding.

THREATS

A rather widespread but naturally uncommon, biologically sparse species. Once regarded as highly threatened it is now known to be secure at many sites. However, some coastal populations and also those growing within scrub or gumland have been lost to land development.

GENUS

Pittosporum

FAMILY

Pittosporaceae

AUTHORITY

Pittosporum pimeleoides A.Cunn. ex Putt. subsp. *pimeleoides*

SYNONYMS

Pittosporum reflexum R.Cunn., *Pittosporum pimeleoides* var. *reflexum* (R.Cunn.) Hook.f., *P. radicans* R.Cunn. ex A.Cunn., *P. gilliesianum* Kirk, *Pittosporum crenulatum* Putt.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

At Whangaroa Harbour semi-erect forms of subsp. *pimeleoides* approach subsp. *majus* in that they often have broadly elliptic leaves.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

March - August

FRUITING

June - May (old fruit long persistent)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Extremely easy to cultivate. Semi-hardwood cuttings strike readily and fresh seed usually germinates within 3-6 months from sowing. This is an extremely attractive shrub with a long flowering period, and beautifully night-scented flowers. It does well in a range of soil types but is best sited in a semi-shaded situation in a free draining soil. *P. pimeleoides* subsp. *pimeleoides* is a variable entity and some selection of the diversity of forms present in the wild would be worthwhile.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for April 2023](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

pittosporum: Pitch seed

pimeleoides: Pimeleoides means “resembling Pimelea”, a genus in the family Thymelaeaceae (Greek, -oides = resembling, like).

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Sparse

Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Northland: 2026 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPR DPS DPT 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

Cooper, R.C. 1956: The Australian and New Zealand species of Pittosporum. Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden 43: 87-188

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 30 August 2006. Description adapted from Cooper (1956).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-pimeleoides-subsp-pimeleoides/>

PDF DATE

25 August 2026