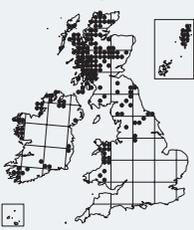


Hygrobrella laxifolia

Lax Notchwort



Identification *H. laxifolia* is inconspicuous, slender (0.2–0.8 mm wide), and creeps on rock faces in permanently wet places. It is usually bright, shiny green, with narrow leaves up to 0.4 mm long, having 2 pointed lobes divided by a notch up to half the length of the leaf. The leaves are very widely spaced on the stem, with the gaps between them usually longer than the leaves themselves. The leaf base hugs the stem and the lobes point towards the shoot tip. Conspicuous underleaves about 0.25 mm long are always present. Individual plants are branched and have thread-like branches.

Similar species The much commoner *Cephalozia bicuspidata* (p. 92) sometimes creeps on rock faces in humid gorges. Its leaf base does not hug the stem and its longer, narrower lobes do not point towards the shoot tip. *Marsupella* species (pp. 155–161) are seldom as vividly green as *H. laxifolia* and none have such long, narrow leaves.

Habitat A widespread, but easily overlooked species of permanently moist rock faces in stream gorges in upland Britain, especially characteristic of rock faces next to waterfalls and cascades. It is usually a slight calcicole, but can tolerate acidic rocks, and shuns limestone. In the far north of Scotland, *H. laxifolia* has been found on damp, gritty soil on loch margins.