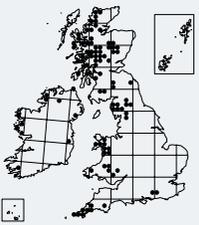
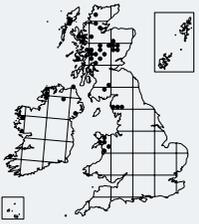


Marsupella sprucei/adusta

Spruce's/Scorched Rustwort

*M. sprucei**M. adusta**M. sprucei**M. adusta**M. sprucei**M. adusta*

Identification

These two diminutive species usually grow in dense, reddish or dark brown erect turfs, but occasionally some shoots are prostrate, and they can be a yellow- or brownish-green. Stems can be up to 8 mm tall, but are often shorter than this and are frequently eroded. The leaves of *M. sprucei* are less than 0.5 mm long, usually about as long as wide with 2 triangular, acute lobes and a rather open notch one-quarter to one-third of the leaf length. Both species have male and female organs on the same shoots, and are almost always fertile, with leaves on the fertile stems quickly increasing in size towards the inflorescence at the stem tip. *M. adusta* differs from *M. sprucei* in having shoots that are more rounded, with erect, less spreading leaves and thus a rather neater appearance, although the stems of *M. adusta* can also be eroded. The leaves also differ in *M. adusta*, being usually longer than wide, in having a shallower notch which is often blunt and rather short, often rounded lobes. *M. adusta* also lacks a perianth which is present in fertile *M. sprucei*, but this is hard to distinguish with a hand lens.

Similar species

The short, untidy patches of *M. sprucei* with frequent, broad inflorescences are usually easily identified and this species is only likely to be confused with *M. adusta*, with which it often grows. *M. profunda* (Paton, p. 315) is a very rare plant associated with china clay pits in Cornwall, and has a deeper and narrower notch than *M. sprucei*, but is difficult to distinguish with a hand lens.

Habitat

M. sprucei grows on the upper surface of acidic rocks, often near the base, where other vegetation shades the rock. It is only frequent in scree or where snow lies late in the year on high ground. It also occurs on rocks on hillsides, in woodland, quarries, and occasionally on thin, mineral soil over rocks. *M. adusta* grows in much the same habitat, although it is generally much less frequent and more strictly montane.