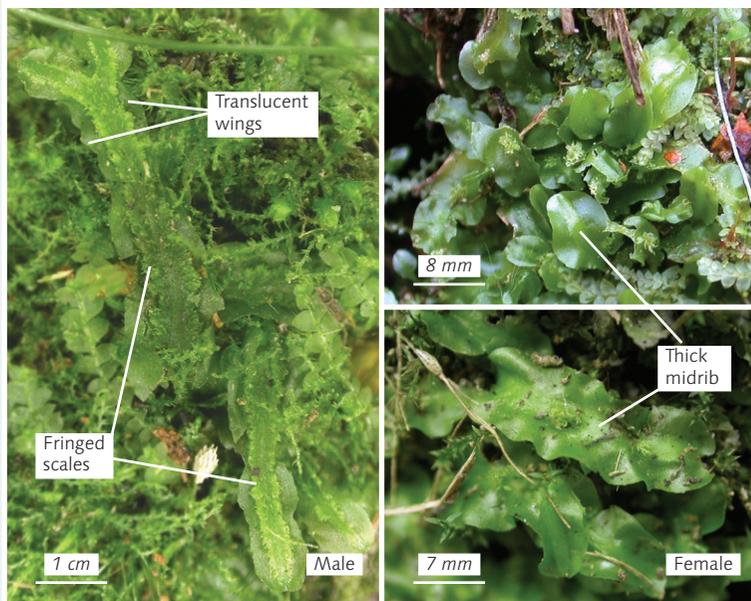


Pallavicinia lyellii

Veilwort



Identification At first glance, *P. lyellii* looks like a *Pellia*, but close examination reveals several differences. It is yellowish-green to dark green, without the red-brown sometimes shown by *Pellia*, and has a remarkably translucent thallus, just 1 cell thick. This contrasts strikingly with a thickened midrib. Thalli are typically 3–4 cm long and 5–7 mm wide, and are dioicous. The fertile parts of *Pallavicinia* are very distinctive: male plants have a set of fringed scales along the sides of the midrib (like lots of little hands), each one protecting a male organ. Female plants have 1 or 2 long, tubular perianths on the midrib, surrounded at the base by a fringe of little hand-like structures.

Similar species Well-grown *Pellia* species (pp. 235–237) do not have translucent thalli contrasting with a well-defined midrib; they show gradual transitions from the centre to the edge of a thallus. The male organs of *Pellia* are in little pits rather than being protected by hand-like structures, and the tubes of *Pellia* do not have a fringe of scales at the base. Occasionally, one finds very thin, non-fertile *Pellia* in heavily shaded peat cuttings, which can cause confusion; it is always best to look for fertile material of *Pallavicinia*. The two (or three) *Moerckia* species (p. 239) have fertile parts like those of *Pallavicinia*, but grow in different habitats.

Habitat *P. lyellii* grows in two different habitats in Britain. In the north and west, it grows among purple moor-grass (*Molinia*) in wet areas on the fringes of bogs, sometimes at the foot of peat cuttings. In contrast, in the south-east it grows at a few scattered sites in woodlands, either on sandstone, damp, sandy soil or leaf litter.