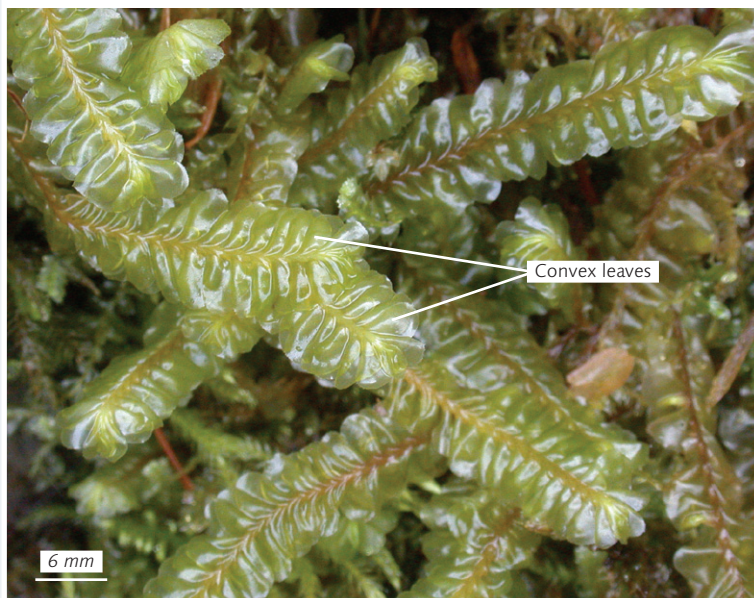
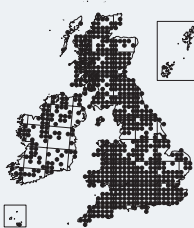


Plagiochila asplenioides

Greater Featherwort

Key 76



Identification *P. asplenioides* has robust stems up to 12 cm long by 5–9 mm wide, and bright or pale green, convex leaves with a translucent sheen. The leaves are 2.5–4.5 mm wide, 3–4.5 mm long, and lie close together in a neat row along each side of the stem, and are attached at an oblique angle, overlapping each other in such a way that the back margin of each leaf lies beneath the front margin of the next leaf towards the shoot tip. The front margin extends for some distance down the stem. Leaves are rounded and usually have small, but distinct teeth on the margins. Underleaves are diminutive and generally regarded as absent. *P. asplenioides* lacks thread-like branches. It is dioicous, but rarely fertile, and capsules are seldom produced.

Similar species *P. porelloides* (p. 193) is usually (but not always) smaller than *P. asplenioides*. Thread-like branches are usually present in *P. porelloides*. *P. porelloides* is the more frequent of the two species in western and northern Britain, whereas *P. asplenioides* is more widespread in southern and eastern regions. *P. britannica* (Paton, p. 417) is much less common than *P. asplenioides* and *P. porelloides*, and is distinguished from them principally on the basis of larger leaf cells and a straight leaf insertion line on the front of the stem. If possible, select good candidates for microscopical examination – keeping a stem of *P. asplenioides* to hand for direct comparison is a useful trick.

Habitat A liverwort of damp turf on calcareous to acidic soils, both in sheltered woodland and in more open places such as chalky slopes. *P. asplenioides* also favours fens, stream banks, hedgerows, rocks and rotting wood. Lowland to subalpine, it is widely distributed in the British Isles.