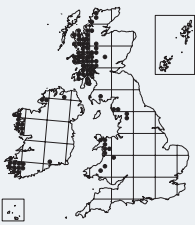


# *Plagiochila exigua*

*P. tridenticulata*

Petty Featherwort



**Identification** This is the smallest British *Plagiochila* (shoots up to 2 mm wide), and the most moisture-loving. It is also very dark, tending to brown or black, especially when dry. The narrow, wedge-shaped leaves are up to 1 mm long, alternate, about one-and-a-half times longer than wide, with a narrow insertion and with the front margin scarcely running down onto the stem (if at all). Leaf tips mostly have 2 pointed lobes, but, as indicated by the older name *P. tridenticulata*, there may sometimes be a third tooth, possibly on the back margin. *P. exigua* is dioicous, but female plants are unknown in the British Isles.

**Similar species** Depauperate forms of *P. punctata* (p. 198) may be as small as *P. exigua*, but have broader leaf insertions. *Leptoscyphus cuneifolius* (p. 182) may grow in the same habitat as *P. exigua* and is also a very small plant with a narrow leaf base, but the wide tip of the wedge-shaped leaves has no pointed lobes.

**Habitat** This Atlantic species is typically a plant of rock surfaces in humid and shady ravines in the west. It is rare, and in many of its locations may be found in small amounts and poor condition, with many bare stems. Nevertheless, in favourable conditions such as above large cascades, it can form conspicuous patches on tree trunks in relatively open sites, and display little indication that the leaves tend to fall off the stems.