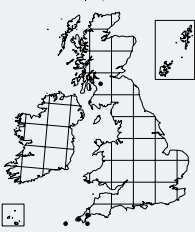


Riccia crystallina

Blue Crystalwort



Identification *R. crystallina* grows in rounded rosettes up to 2.5 cm diameter, composed of rather few broad lobes that are rounded, but widest above the middle. The plants are pale green or bluish-green, without reddish pigment and become almost white or bluish-green when dry. The upper surface has a very short, shallow groove near the tip, and becomes perforated (and later spongy) only in the older parts.

Similar species *R. cavernosa* (p. 263) is very similar, but is more widespread. Its thalli are more branched and usually yellow-green, and retain this colour when dry. The upper surface is more conspicuously perforated, even at the tips, becoming spongy throughout. However, the two species can sometimes only be reliably distinguished microscopically by examining the ornamentation of their spores. *R. huebeneriana* (p. 264) is also similar, but smaller (up to 1 cm diameter), and often violet or reddish, with a prominent groove on its branches; the upper thallus surface has more conspicuous air pores, but is perforated or spongy only in the older parts. *R. canaliculata* (p. 265) is also smaller with narrow (up to 1 mm), often grooved branches. Terrestrial forms of *Ricciocarpos natans* (p. 260) lack the spongy older parts of the thallus.

Habitat This rare, southern species grows on sandy soil in fields of bulbs and vegetables, and more rarely in gardens, on footpaths or in coastal car parks.