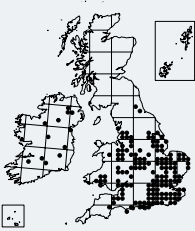


Riccia fluitans

Floating Crystalwort

Key 13



Identification This slender thallose liverwort has both floating and terrestrial forms. Floating plants grow in tangled masses with thalli forked 2–6 times into 2 nearly equal branches. Thalli are up to 2 cm long, and about 1 mm wide. In terrestrial forms, thalli grow in rosettes up to 2 cm diameter and may be up to 1.5 mm wide. The branches fork at 60–90° to each other, are linear, somewhat translucent, bright or yellowish-green and sometimes tinged violet or reddish. They lack a groove above or become very weakly grooved only at the extreme tip, which is broad and almost truncate with a central notch. The surface has a faint, delicate network of lines, and air pores are visible as minute dots in terrestrial plants. Capsules are very rare and appear as swellings on older parts of the thallus.

Similar species *R. rhenana* (Paton, p. 583) is very similar, but is never reddish. Its branches fork 2–4 times into 2 nearly equal branches, with each branch forming a 80–105° angle. However, microscopical confirmation is desirable. *R. canaliculata* (p. 265) is always terrestrial, with opaque thalli that lack a distinct network of lines. They are grooved above, although this is more obvious when the plants dry out. Most diagnostic are the branch tips which are narrow and somewhat pointed, and not notched. *Ricciolepis natans* (p. 260) also has both floating and terrestrial forms, but both forms are not delicate and translucent, and have broader, heart-shaped thalli.

Habitat Floating forms grow in stagnant or slow-moving water in ponds, clay pits, marl pits, canals and ditches, often with duckweed (*Lemna*) and sometimes *Ricciolepis natans*. Terrestrial forms grow on mud, humus or stonework by water.