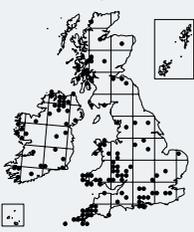


*Riccia subbifurca*

Least Crystalwort



**Identification** A small *Riccia* species that grows in mats or rosettes up to 15 mm diameter. The thallus branches are linear or have slightly curved sides, only about 1 mm wide (up to 2 times as broad than long), pale or yellowish-green, but often tinged reddish along the margins. The thalli have a distinct, shallow, flat-bottomed median groove. Older parts are flat above, the margins are rounded in section and swollen, frequently with one margin asymmetrically more swollen than the other, and often (but not always) bearing scattered, colourless hairs that are visible with a hand lens. The thalli do not persist for long. Capsules are commonly produced within older parts of the thallus.

**Similar species** Plants of *R. glauca* (p. 267) are similar in colour, but larger, to 2 cm or more in diameter. The branches are up to 4 times as broad as tall, the median groove is very short, and the margins are scarcely swollen. *R. sorocarpa* (p. 266) is also larger, with rosettes up to 2 cm diameter, branches are greyish-green above with a sharply V-shaped groove, and its margins taper upwards to a narrow acute edge. *R. crozalsii* (Paton, p. 593) is most similar, but a much rarer, southern species of coastal habitats. It also has thalli with hairs, but these are more conspicuous and incurved over the thallus, the median groove is narrower and deeper, and the margins are symmetrical and less swollen; older parts of its thallus become convex above. *R. bifurca* (Paton, p. 595) is similar in size, but lacks marginal, colourless hairs, is greyish-green, and older parts of the long-persistent thalli become channelled. It is restricted in Britain to The Lizard.

**Habitat** *R. subbifurca* species grows in a wide variety of habitats, including arable fields and gardens, thin soil on rocky banks, gravel tracks, footpaths and reservoir margins. It often grows with *R. sorocarpa*, but is usually less conspicuous.