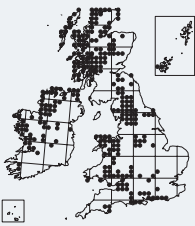


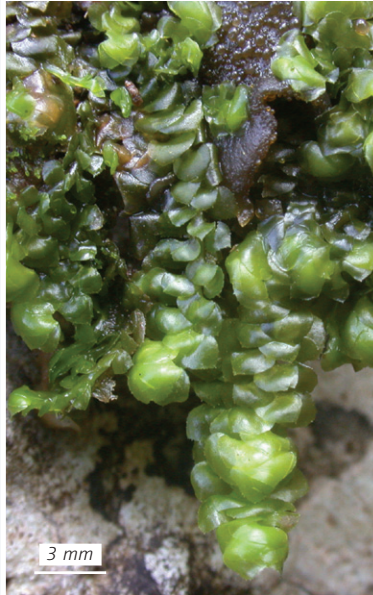
Scapania aspera

Rough Earwort

Key 37



Front lobe extends well across stem



Identification The lime-loving tendencies of this medium-sized (shoots 1–4.5 mm wide; leaves to about 2 mm long), brownish-green plant are usually the first pointer to its identity. Its most characteristic feature is the front leaf lobe that extends a long way across the stem; this front lobe also runs down onto the stem. A useful confirmatory feature is that branches arise from the back of the stem. *S. aequiloba* and almost all other British *Scapania* species have branches that come out of the sides of the stem.

Similar species *S. aspera* is most likely to be confused with the similar but smaller *S. aequiloba* (p. 178). As its name suggests, *S. aequiloba* has the front lobe closer in size to the back lobe, and it also has branches coming from the sides of the stem. *S. gracilis* (p. 180) generally avoids limestone, but can be distinguished from *S. aspera* by the toothed base to its front lobes. *S. nemorea* (p. 172) has brown gemmae and larger, rounder back lobes.

Habitat *S. aspera* grows both directly on lime-rich rock and in lime-rich turf, especially in humid sites. Chalk, limestone, calcareous sandstone and shell sand are all suitable substrates. It generally avoids very wet places, but can grow on rocks in flushes. *S. aspera* is locally abundant in the Pennines, both on natural rock and drystone walls. It is also characteristic of the liverwort assemblage of north-facing chalk grassland in southern England. Although less of a mountain plant than *S. aequiloba*, it can grow at high altitudes.