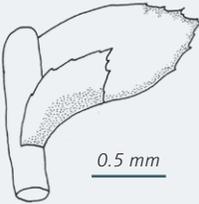
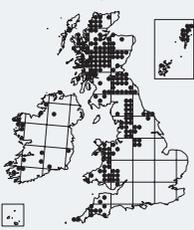


Scapania scandica

Norwegian Earwort



Identification

S. scandica is much the commonest of five small, pale green or pigmented *Scapania* species with gradually narrowed front leaf lobes (*S. curta*, *S. lingulata*, *S. parvifolia* and *S. praetervis*, Paton, pp. 356–362, are the others in Britain). Microscopical examination is essential to confirm identification, so it is always advisable to collect material for confirmation. *S. scandica* produces copious, pale green gemmae, which often catch the eye. Shoots are 1–2.5 mm wide, with leaves less than 1.5 mm long.

Similar species

Apart from its four close relatives, from which it cannot be distinguished in the field, *S. scandica* is most similar to *S. irrigua* (p. 173). *S. irrigua* has parallel-sided front lobes that rapidly contract to the base, and more pointed back lobes. Small, poorly grown plants of *S. irrigua* are a particular pitfall. *S. scandica* also looks like *Diplophyllum obtusifolium* (p. 167), which differs in having broadly rounded tips to the front lobes and creases on its perianth; *Scapania* perianths are usually flattened and are seldom creased. Plants with perianths should be sought in the field as these provide vital characters for microscopical identification. Collected material must be examined microscopically within a couple of days, before it loses its oil bodies.

Habitat

This pioneer species of crumbling, acidic soil banks typically grows in forestry, disused quarries, on open hillsides, soil on cliff ledges or at the foot of crags and exposed mountain summits. It tends to be present in rather small quantity. Much more rarely it is found on decaying logs. Like *S. scandica*, *S. curta* is a pioneer on acidic substrates. *S. lingulata* is also a pioneer, but on base-rich as well as acidic cliffs and soil. *S. praetervis* occurs on mildly base-rich rock and boulders on river banks. *S. parvifolia* looks especially like *S. scandica*, and occurs on exposed, bare soil on mountains.