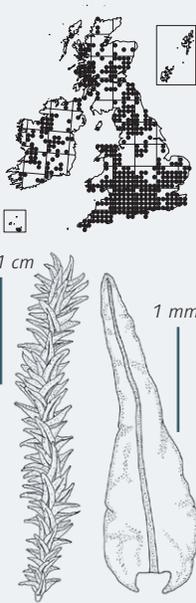


Anomodon viticulosus

Rambling Tail-moss

Key 164, 354



Identification

A. viticulosus forms large, loose, rather pale yellowish-green tufts. Sparse, scattered branches (2–8 cm long) grow more or less erectly or pendently from horizontal primary stems. It is remarkable for its pronounced hygroscopic quality: when dry shoots are moistened, the dull green, much twisted leaves change in a matter of seconds from being appressed to the stem to pointing well-away from it. They also become a brighter green when moistened. Leaves are 2–3 mm long, run down onto the stem, and are broad at the base, but narrow markedly in the upper part to form a long, blunt tip. The nerve ends below the tip. The erect, cylindrical (2–3 mm long) capsules are rare in winter and spring, and borne on a pale yellow seta 2 cm long.

Similar species

The very rare *A. attenuatus* (Smith, p. 744) is smaller (shoots up to 5 cm long; leaves 1–2 mm long). The rare *A. longifolius* (p. 693) is much smaller than *A. viticulosus*, with shoots up to 2 cm long and leaves 1–2.5 mm long, and has more sharply pointed leaves. The long branches of *A. viticulosus* resemble an acrocarpous moss, but are connected by creeping primary shoots. Acrocarps with plane margins and a blunt leaf tip, such as *Dichodontium pellucidum* (p. 361), are not usually as large as *A. viticulosus*, tend not to grow on vertical rock faces, and are never connected by creeping primary shoots.

Habitat

A. viticulosus most often occurs – sometimes in great quantity – on well-drained, lightly shaded, base-rich or calcareous rocks and drystone walls in the lowlands. For example, many limestone cliffs in wooded valleys are covered by extensive mats of this species. It also occurs on chalk, both on hedge banks and in grassland, as well as at the base of old trees, especially ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and elm (*Ulmus*). Another habitat is soil-coated tree roots, masonry or concrete by streams and rivers. It may also be found on shaded concrete and brickwork away from water.