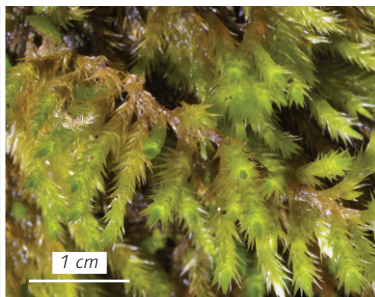
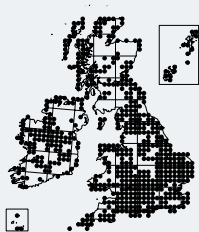


Homalothecium lutescens

Yellow Feather-moss

Key 360



Identification *H. lutescens* is fairly robust, pale or yellowish-green, with irregularly branched shoots that grow in loose, ascending tufts or as scattered stems. A less common form grows prostrate and closely attached to rocks and boulders, especially on limestone. In both cases the branches are stout (1–2 mm wide when dry), fairly long (typically more than 1 cm), and straight or nearly so. The leaves are about 2–3 mm long, triangular spearhead-shaped, widest at the base, and taper evenly to a finely pointed tip. They are distinctive in having very strong pleats lengthways along the leaf, as in *H. sericeum*. The margins are only weakly and finely toothed. Capsules occur less frequently than in *H. sericeum*, and are 1.5–2 mm long and slightly curved.

Similar species Normal forms differ from *H. sericeum* (p. 738) in the long, straight branches and irregular, lax habit. However, prostrate plants on rocks or rocky, coastal banks may only be identifiable if capsules are present (straight, 2–3 mm long in *H. sericeum*; slightly curved and 1.5–2 mm long in *H. lutescens*). *Brachythecium glareosum* (p. 742) also has strongly pleated leaves, but with a very finely attenuated, hair-like and often twisted leaf tip. The stems of *Tomentypnum nitens* (p. 725) are covered by a felt of rhizoids, and it occurs in mires and flushes. *Eurhynchium striatum* (p. 764) leaves have longitudinal folds, but are broadly triangular and remain spreading when dry. *Ptychodium plicatum* (p. 692) grows at high altitudes in Scotland, and can be distinguished by its numerous miniature, leaf-like outgrowths on the stem. *Brachythecium albicans* (p. 741) grows with *H. lutescens* in some habitats (e.g. sand dunes) but has more slender, string-like, very pale green shoots, only about 1 mm wide. The leaves of *B. albicans* narrow rather abruptly to a slender tip.

Habitat *H. lutescens* is characteristic of short, unimproved, calcareous grassland, especially on chalk and limestone. It is also found in other open places, quarries, and on sand dunes. The prostrate form is locally frequent on rocks and boulders in limestone dales.

Photos Fred Rumsey (left) & Robert Goodison (right) Text Tom Blockeel