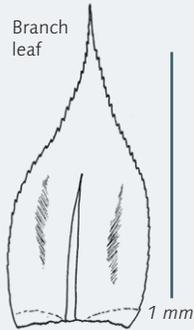


*Isothecium myosuroides*

Mouse-tail Moss

Key 333



## Identification

*I. myosuroides* has a distinctly tree-like growth form, its main stems growing away from the substrate, unbranched in the lower part, and bushily branched above. It often occurs in pure, dense mats, so its tree-like form may not be immediately apparent. It often grows on inclined or vertical surfaces, with the stems and branches curving downwards. Shoots are typically 1–2 cm tall. Stem leaves, especially towards the base of the stem, are about 2 mm long, broadly egg-shaped to triangular with a heart-shaped base, rapidly contracting to a finely tapering tip. Branch leaves are 1–1.5 mm long, narrower, triangularly spearhead-shaped, and taper to a shorter but still slender, rather sharply toothed tip. The single nerve ceases above mid-leaf. Capsules are 2–2.5 mm long, frequent in some regions, elliptical, slightly asymmetrical and inclined. The lid has a long beak. In western areas a very robust form (*var. brachyhecioides*) occurs on rock faces and ledges with irregularly branched, prostrate shoots to 10 cm or more. This form is almost always non-fertile, but is best confirmed microscopically.

## Similar species

*I. holtii* (p. 735) is more robust than *I. myosuroides*. Its shoots often take on a bronzed colour, and the leaves are more broadly pointed, neatly appressed and overlapping. *I. alopecuroides* (p. 737) is bushy rather than tree-like, and has concave leaves that are egg-shaped to elliptical, and broadly pointed at the tip. *Eurhynchium striatulum* (p. 765) is less obviously tree-like, and the slightly pleated, larger stem leaves appear wrinkled. Small forms of *Thamnobryum alopecurum* (p. 684) are easily distinguished by the egg-shaped to elliptical and broadly pointed branch leaves.

## Habitat

*I. myosuroides* grows on boulders and tree trunks in woodland and shaded places, but may occur in the open. It does not grow on strongly base-rich rocks such as limestone. It is abundant in rocky, upland woods on siliceous and non-calcareous substrates, and in western areas may dominate trunks of oak (*Quercus*) and other trees.

Photos Gordon Rothero (left), David Holyoak (top right) & Ian Atherton (bottom right)  
Drawing David Genny Text Tom Blockeel