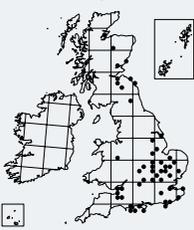


*Pterygoneurum ovatum*

Oval-leaved Pottia



**Identification** The tiny (1–2 mm) stems of *P. ovatum* are rather bud-like, with concave, closely overlapping green leaves up to 2 mm long, which taper very abruptly to a green or silvery hair point. On the upper surface of the leaf blade they have 2–4 raised wavy lines of tissue which run along the length of the leaf. The rather narrow, brown capsules are borne on a short (2–3 mm long) seta and have a beaked lid.

**Similar species** The raised lines of tissue on the nerves of this species are not always spotted at once, as they can be concealed by the rather concave folding of the leaves, but once seen they are immediately diagnostic of *Pterygoneurum*. No other genus in Britain has lines of tissue anything like this. These days, they are diagnostic of *P. ovatum*, as the only other British species, *P. lamellatum* (Smith, p. 338), has not been seen for many years. *P. lamellatum* tends to have a longer seta (3–6 mm), but can only be reliably distinguished by microscopic characters.

**Habitat** *P. ovatum* is a plant of recently disturbed, highly calcareous, soil in pits and quarries, amongst rocks and on sea cliffs. It is most frequently found on chalk, but also grows on other substrates including base-rich sandstones and base-rich clays. It declined markedly in the 20th century and it is now rare in all its former strongholds.