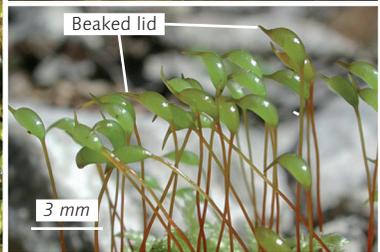
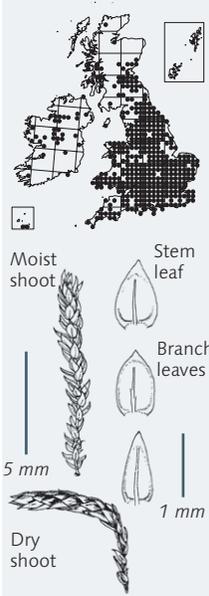


*Rhynchostegium murale*

Wall Feather-moss

Key 368



## Identification

*R. murale* forms small or medium-sized, glossy or pale green shoots, the older parts sometimes turning reddish-brown. It is irregularly branched, the branches short and more or less prostrate, usually forming compact patches or growing as scattered shoots among other species. They alter little when dry. The leaves are egg-shaped or oval, about 1 mm or so in length, broadly pointed at the tip and deeply concave. Often they are erect and overlapping, making the shoots look cylindrical, but sometimes they are more loosely arranged, slightly spreading, and the shoots then appear less neat. The branch tip does not become very attenuated, and is often blunt because of the concave, appressed and overlapping leaves. The leaves have a single nerve. Curved, oblong capsules, about 1.5 mm long, are often present and have a long, beaked lid that is almost as long as the capsule. The seta is smooth.

## Similar species

The concave leaves and rather short cylindrical branches are distinctive, but loose forms of *R. murale* may resemble *R. confertum* (p. 761), especially when the leaves are narrow and spreading. Usually, however, some parts of the shoots will show deeply concave, appressed and overlapping leaves. Small patches of *Scleropodium cespitans* (p. 754) and especially *S. tourettii* (p. 755) might be mistaken for *R. murale*, but fortunately *R. murale* often has capsules, and can then be distinguished by its beaked lid and smooth seta.

## Habitat

*R. murale* is nearly always found on rocks and stones. Although it occurs on crags and large blocks, it is particularly characteristic of small stones on the ground in woods and similar places, in light to moderate shade. It is also widespread on the tops of old walls. It is a plant of base-rich habitats, especially chalk and limestone, but may colonize walls built of base-poor stone if they are mortared. It is much less common on the roots and trunks of trees.