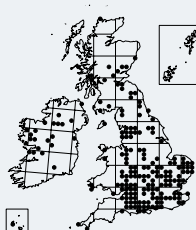


Amblystegium varium

Hygroamblystegium varium

Willow Feather-moss



Identification *A. varium* forms irregularly and often loosely branched patches with stem leaves up to 1 mm or more in length. As in *A. serpens*, the leaves are broadly spearhead-shaped, with a tapering tip, but in *A. varium* they are typically wider. The most important character is the long nerve, which reaches almost to the leaf tip and can be seen with a hand lens on well-developed shoots. Capsules are occasional.

Similar species This species resembles *A. serpens* (p. 702), but is usually a little larger and tends not to form the dense, intricate patches of thread-like shoots that are often seen in *A. serpens*. Larger forms of *A. varium* approach *A. humile* (p. 704) and *Hygroamblystegium tenax* (p. 706), and sometimes microscopic examination is needed to confirm the shorter nerve of *A. humile* and the stouter nerve of *H. tenax*. *Cratoneuron filicinum* (p. 701) is generally a more rigid, closely branched moss and has distinct patches of cells at the leaf base. *A. radiale* (Smith, p. 767) has a leaf base that runs down onto the stem which can usually be detected with a hand lens on the main stems. This is also true of *Brachythecium reflexum* (p. 750), which is a rare upland species confined to Scotland and which hardly overlaps in habitat with *A. varium*.

Habitat *A. varium* is usually found in wet or marshy ground, including carr woodland, and also by streams and ponds, on decaying vegetation, wood, stones and soil.