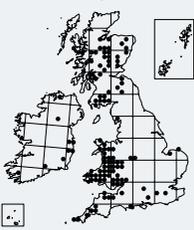


Diplophyllum obtusifolium

Blunt-leaved Earwort



Identification *D. obtusifolium* needs to be consciously looked for, but once known is easily found and recognized. It has slightly shorter (up to 1 mm), wider (about 0.5 mm) leaf lobes than *D. albicans* and always lacks a band of clear cells in the middle of its leaf lobes. The upper leaves are normally noticeably concave through a hand lens. Unlike *D. albicans*, it is seldom brown, typically being mid-green. It is most often found as rosettes of plants radiating out of a point, presumably founded by a single spore, and this growth pattern is the easiest way to spot candidates for examination with a hand lens. Shoots may grow up to about 2 mm wide. Male and female organs are on the same shoot.

Similar species The lack of a band of clear cells in the middle of its leaf lobes, and wider, shorter leaves distinguish *D. obtusifolium* from *D. albicans* (p. 166). All *Scapania* species are dioicous and the compressed perianths are usually smooth rather than creased below the mouth. Small species such as *S. scandica* (p. 170) can look very similar, but the front lobes are more asymmetrical and pointed rather than broadly rounded. In the mountains, a *Diplophyllum* lacking a band of clear cells in the middle of its leaf lobes should be collected (especially if fertile) in case it is the scarce *D. taxifolium* (Paton, p. 340).

Habitat This pioneer of open, crumbling acidic soil in the north and west is most characteristic of bare, iron-stained soil on banks by forestry plantations, but also grows in disused quarries or on pathsides. It seems to be an early arrival on bare soil and is usually part of an open community that includes *Dicranella* and *Ditrichum* species and *Jungermannia gracillima*. Once a carpet of *D. albicans* takes over, *D. obtusifolium* has long gone.