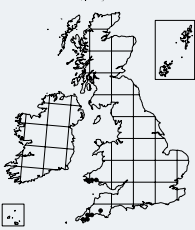


*Ditrichum subulatum*

Awl-leaved Ditrichum



**Identification** This species is similar in size to *Dicranella heteromalla* (shoots 8–10 mm tall) and has 4 mm long, straight leaves with a wide base and a very narrow upper part. It grows in open turfs or loose tufts and is usually a light, glossy green. The erect capsules are strikingly pale green when fresh, as is the seta, and are produced during the winter. Both capsule and seta are brown when dry. Capsules are shorter (less than 3 times as long as wide) than those of most other British *Ditrichum* species, thus appearing more like those of a *Dicranella*.

**Similar species** No other British *Ditrichum* species are found in the habitats where *D. subulatum* grows; what is more, the only one of a similar size, *D. heteromallum* (p. 346), has long, narrow capsules (more than 3 times as long as wide). *D. subulatum* is most likely to be confused with *Dicranella heteromalla* (p. 371), and these two species often grow together. *D. heteromalla* differs in having an inclined, asymmetrical capsule and leaves that are not quite as narrow. Identification of non-fruiting plants requires a microscope. *Dicranella subulata* (Smith, p. 192) has a red seta and inclined capsules; *Dicranella crispa* (Smith, p. 192) has leaves that are strongly curved away from the stem and red setae; both grow in very different habitats to *D. subulatum*.

**Habitat** Most British colonies of *D. subulatum* are on acidic banks above coastal creeks in Cornwall and Pembrokeshire. It favours bare, crumbly soil around the roots of overhanging oak trees (*Quercus*), a situation often shared by *Cephaloziella turneri*, *Diplophyllum albicans* and *Epipterygium tozeri*. There are a couple of very old records from hedge banks in Sussex.