

Leptodontium proliferum

In this first instalment of a new occasional mini-series in *Field Bryology*, **Ron Porley** provides field notes for the identification of *Leptodontium proliferum* which was reported new to Britain in 2010.



Identification

This species forms small, green to dark green, loose turfs or scattered shoots, with stems 6–8 mm tall. The upper leaves are noticeably longer than the lower leaves; when moist they are held erect, but they are twisted when dry. The distinguishing feature is the presence of clusters of gemmae on the tips of the youngest (uppermost) leaves, actually attached to a long, excurrent nerve. When well developed, both the gemmae cluster and excurrent nerve appear dark green, almost black, with more than 100 gemmae in each cluster. On younger shoots the gemmae cluster may be par-

Photo Des Callaghan

tially or wholly hidden by the upper leaves and is paler. The lower leaves do not have an excurrent nerve and are sharply toothed at the apex.

Similar species

The only other species that *L. proliferum* can be mistaken for is *Leptodontium gemmascens*. This also has clusters of gemmae (15–40 in a cluster) on the leaf tips, but they are yellow-green and occur on leaves to about mid-way or below on the stem, not just on the uppermost leaves. Since the leaves are more widely spreading, the gemmae clusters are more conspicuous in *L. gemmascens*. In addition, the upper and lower leaves are more or less equal in length. Under a microscope a further distinguishing character is the leaf margin of the upper leaves; in *L. proliferum* there is a border of elongated cells, but this is absent in *L. gemmascens*.

Habitat

So far, *L. proliferum* is known from only one place in the British Isles, on the scuffed margins of a bowling green in South Lancashire. It grows on decaying grass matter, and in this respect is similar to *L. gemmascens* which also grows on decaying vegetation, typically thatch, but also on decaying leaf bases of grasses. *L. proliferum* is almost certainly an introduced species, first found in Britain in 2000, and is otherwise known only from South America, Mexico and Lesotho.

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Further reading

Porley, R.D. & Edwards, S. (2010). *Leptodontium proliferum* Herzog (Bryopsida: Pottiaceae), new to Europe. *Journal of Bryology* 32, 46–50.

11.1.11

The snipe are in their deep marsh
Swaddled in a cushion of fen moss
Breasts tickled by tufts and tassels.

I trudged into their flight ambit;
Seven birds sprung,
Like party poppers
Then scribed out over Cortial Lough
Across the emptied grave of Gerry Evans.

Settling in Ballinurd
Huddled among the heather;
Dark eyes glistening
Mirrors to bog mosses,
Fascicles draped
Lustrous hues of whiskey and wine;
Versions of the half moon brilliance
Of the north window of Knockbridge
Church.

Defying the bittern's demise.

Maurice Eakin

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*Written in the days after some 'square-bashing'
in Co. Louth.*

► *Aulacomnium palustre* and *Sphagnum palustre*.
M. Eakin

