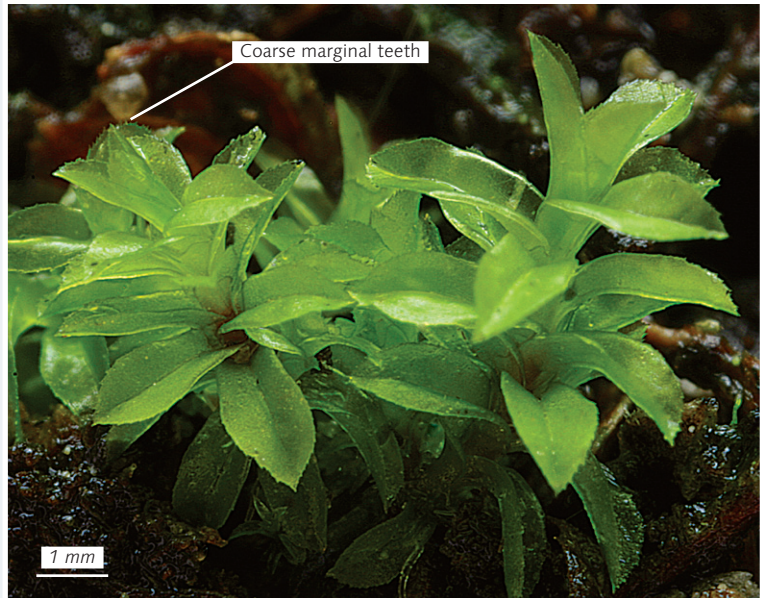
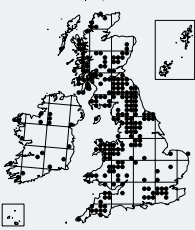


Leptodontium flexifolium

Bent-leaved Beard-moss



Identification This species appears at first glance to be a *Barbula* growing on an acidic substrate. It is a small (shoots 2–15 mm tall), yellow-green moss, growing in loose patches or as scattered individuals. Leaves vary in size from 1 mm long to over 2 mm. The broad, often rounded leaf tip has coarse marginal teeth, easily seen with a hand lens. The leaf is often bent backwards, and is tongue-shaped with a distinct nerve that ends below the leaf tip. The moss shrivels up when dry, making these features difficult to see. Upon wetting, however, the characteristic shape and teeth become obvious. Capsules are occasional, and held on an erect, wavy seta. Deciduous, bulb-like branches are often present.

Similar species *L. flexifolium* is only likely to be confused with *L. gemmascens* (p. 445), which has a tapering leaf tip crowned with a cluster of gemmae that are absent in *L. flexifolium*. The coarse teeth will distinguish *L. flexifolium* from other small, yellowish mosses such as *Barbula convoluta* (p. 454), *B. unguiculata* (p. 455). *Dichodontium pellucidum* (p. 361) may also have coarsely toothed upper leaf margins, but has a rough back to the upper nerve composed of small teeth, compared to the smooth, shiny back of the upper nerve in *L. flexifolium*. The rare *Bryoerythrophyllum caledonicum* (Smith, p. 299) also has leaves with coarsely toothed upper margins, but grows on permanently wet, base-rich rock ledges in the mountains of Scotland. *Hennediella* species (pp. 490–491) also have leaves with coarsely toothed upper margins, but grow on shaded, disturbed soil at low altitudes.

Habitat Occurs on humus or well-drained, peaty, acidic ground on heaths and moorland, in open woodland and on thin soil on boulder tops, and occasionally on decaying wood. It often persists under bracken on moorland, appearing after the fern has died back in the winter. In its other habitat, on weathered thatch, it sometimes occurs with the much rarer *L. gemmascens*, but usually on more exposed, sunny aspects of a roof.

Photo Des Callaghan Text Ron Porley