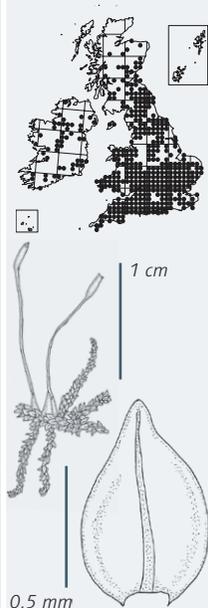


Leskea polycarpa

Many-fruited Leskea

Key 346



Identification

This slender moss forms dull, dark yellow-green, irregularly branched patches and tufts, in which short, curved or nearly upright branches up to about 4 mm long (although mats can be 2–3 cm across) arise from prostrate primary stems. Plants are often covered with silt. The crowded leaves are about twice as long as wide (about 1 mm or less long, 0.5 mm wide), held pointing away from the stem, and change little when dry. The nerve is well-developed in the lower half of the leaf, but disappears in mid-leaf. Cylindrical capsules are usually abundant in summer. They are about 3 mm long – 4 times longer than wide – and held erect or slightly inclined to the vertical. Setae are about 1 cm long, and arise from the primary stems, not from the branches.

Similar species

Myrinia pulvinata (p. 688) may grow with *L. polycarpa*, but is smaller, darker, holds its leaves appressed to the stem when dry, has a fainter nerve, and shorter capsules. *Amblystegium serpens* (p. 702) is smaller, with leaves more than twice as long as wide, and its curved capsules on a seta about 1.5 cm long are held more horizontally when mature. *Leucodon sciuroides* (p. 675) has similarly elongated, narrow capsules, but rarely produces them, and does not grow in the same riparian habitats as *L. polycarpa*. Young plants of *Cryphaea heteromalla* (p. 672) and *Dendrocryphaea lamyana* (p. 673) that have not produced secondary shoots look very like *L. polycarpa*, but have more finely pointed, straighter leaves. *Lescuraea*, *Pseudoleskeella*, *Pseudoleskea* and *Ptychodium* species (Smith, pp. 737–741; this guide pp. 690–692) are calcicoles of montane rocks. *Anomodon longifolius* (p. 693) has a sharper leaf tip, and grows on rock.

Habitat

L. polycarpa characteristically grows on the branches, trunks and exposed roots of trees in the flood zones of lowland rivers, streams, and ditches, and beside standing water, particularly where mud from flooding water coats the trees. It may also grow on stones, woodwork and brickwork. Occasionally it may be found away from water courses, for example on willows in moderately humid places or in the tops of hedges.

Photos David Holyoak Drawings Jonathan Graham Text Mark Lawley