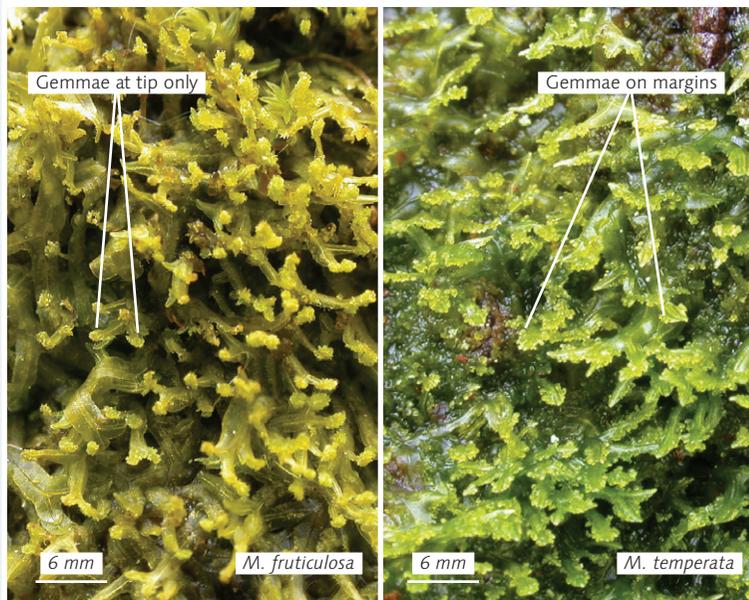
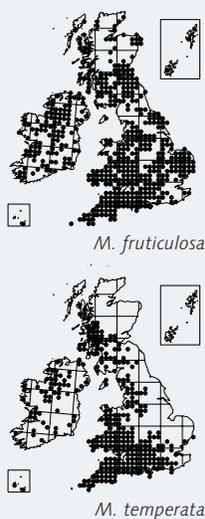


*Metzgeria fruticulosa/temperata**M. violacea/M. consanguinea*

Bluish/Whiskered Veilwort

Key 18



**Identification** This species pair is usually easily separable in the field, but can be tricky after rain if the gemmae have been washed off. Both form patches of 1 mm wide, yellowish-green thalli that end in narrow gemma-bearing branches which stick out from the substrate. The gemmae of *M. fruticulosa* are restricted to the very tip of these branches and form across both surfaces; in contrast, *M. temperata* only has gemmae on the margins of its branches, but they extend slightly further along them. Long-dry *M. fruticulosa* turns blue: a feature unique to it. Sporophytes are rare in *M. fruticulosa*, and unknown in *M. temperata* in Britain.

**Similar species** Confusion is only likely with gemmiferous *M. furcata* (p. 246), although this species produces gemmae infrequently in Britain. These are irregularly dispersed along the margins of thalli of normal width, rather than on attenuated branches.

**Habitat** *M. fruticulosa* and *M. temperata* mainly grow on twigs and branches of deciduous trees, especially willow (*Salix*). Old elders (*Sambucus nigra*) and young elms (*Ulmus*) can also support a profusion of *M. fruticulosa*, whilst *M. temperata* may be abundant on the trunks or twigs of spruce (*Picea*), or on alder (*Alnus*) trunks. In general, *M. fruticulosa* is commoner in the lowlands, and the most abundant *Metzgeria* near the coast in parts of the south-west. In contrast, *M. temperata* is more at home in western parts of Britain, although humid willow carr is another favoured habitat. The two species sometimes grow together, owing to considerable overlap in their habitat preferences. Block scree, tors and river gorges may hold colonies of *M. temperata* on rock, whereas *M. fruticulosa* is restricted to bark.