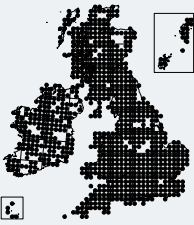


*Metzgeria furcata*

Forked Veilwort

Key 18



**Identification** This is the commonest thallose liverwort on trees and shrubs, and the most frequently encountered *Metzgeria* in lowland Britain away from the coast. Its thalli are just over 1 mm wide, and have a thick midrib that contrasts strongly with the remainder. They fork at the tip, and form yellowish-green patches on trunks and thicker branches. The margins are flat or slightly down-curved and have a line of hairs scattered along them; there are also hairs on the underside of the thallus. This dioicous plant only occasionally produces sporophytes, but inflorescences can be found on the underside of most patches. Narrow, more or less linear gemmae are sometimes present on the thallus margins.

**Similar species** Whereas *M. furcata* only occasionally produces gemmae on the margins of unmodified thalli, our two other *Metzgeria* species that are common on bark always have gemmae. Both *M. fruticulosa* and *M. temperata* (p. 245) produce their gemmae on attenuated branches. Populations on rock can easily be confused with *M. conjugata* (p. 247), but are usually more tightly appressed to the rock and have less down-curved margins. Additional confirmation comes from *M. conjugata* being monoicous, whereas *M. furcata* is dioicous. *Apometzgeria pubescens* (p. 249) is strikingly furry, whereas *M. furcata* only has scattered hairs.

**Habitat** *M. furcata* is common on bark in most of Britain, although it is rather patchily distributed in drier parts of the south-east. It grows on a wide range of trees and shrubs, especially ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and willow (*Salix*). It sometimes grows on rocks, walls or tombstones, especially in the west.