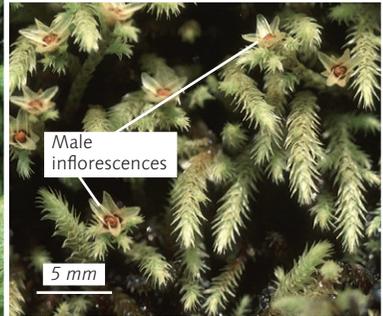
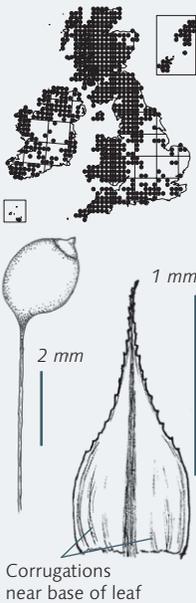


Philonotis fontana

Fountain Apple-moss

Key 212, 225

**Identification**

A variable plant, with pale yellowish-green or glaucous green upright shoots, several centimetres tall, red stems and a mat of red-brown rhizoids covering the lower part of stems. Scraggy, juvenile shoots may be less than 1 cm long and lie flat on the ground; these look very different from well-developed shoots in flushes, and often occur on disturbed ground. The short (0.8–1.5 mm), triangular leaves have corrugated surfaces, with a prominent nerve and recurved margins. On male plants (bottom right photograph), the leaves surrounding the red-brown inflorescences have a rounded tip, with the nerve ceasing below the tip. Spherical capsules 2 mm long frequently form in summer. They are held horizontally on an orange or red seta 3–5 cm tall.

Similar species

Philonotis species can be difficult to distinguish confidently. It is advisable to collect mature shoots (i.e. with red-brown male inflorescences or capsules) for microscopical checking. *P. caespitosa* (p. 635) is more slender, with shoots often curved at the tip, and the uncorrugated leaves have plane margins. *P. calcarea* (p. 637) usually has longer leaves (1.8–3 vs 0.8–1.5 mm as in *P. fontana*). *P. arnellii* (p. 634) and *P. rigida* (p. 633) have narrower, more tapering leaves. *P. seriata* (p. 638) has leaves spirally arranged on its stems. Of other genera, small, pale *Pohlia* species (e.g. *Pohlia melanodon*, p. 610, and *P. wahlenbergii*, p. 611) may resemble young *P. fontana*, but *Pohlia* plants have more translucent leaves that are not corrugated. The leaves of *Conostomum tetragonum* (p. 632) are arranged in 5 ranks. *Paludella squarrosa* (p. 573) may be a similar colour to *Philonotis* species, but its leaves curve strongly away from the stem. *Aulacomnium palustre* (p. 625) and *Breutelia chrysocoma* (p. 640) are bushier in habit.

Habitat

Much the commonest species of its genus, *P. fontana* is frequent in marshes and flushes in mountains, by streams and on wet cliff ledges; also by lakes, ditches and woodland rides, in ruts on wet tracks, boggy fields and quarries. It may also occur on wet rocks.