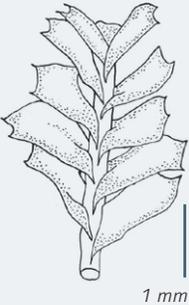
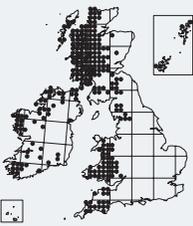


Plagiochila spinulosa

Prickly Featherwort

Key 76



Identification

P. spinulosa often forms extensive, pale green to yellow-green mats, but is very variable. Shoots are up to about 3.5 mm wide, with leaves up to 2 mm wide and long. Leaves are alternate, typically oval, up to one-and-a-half times longer than wide, with several irregular, spiny teeth on the tip and back margin. The front margin of the leaf lacks teeth and extends well down onto the stem, with a slightly curved line of insertion that lies obliquely on the stem. Leaves often fall off the stem early, leaving bare stems. Plants are aromatic when crushed. *P. spinulosa* is dioicous, but male plants and sporophytes are unknown. The laterally compressed perianth is egg-shaped (with a central keel) when viewed from the front, but from the side the perianth is seen to have a wide mouth at the top.

Similar species

P. spinulosa is larger and more frequent than two similar species, *P. punctata* (p. 198) and *P. killarniensis* (p. 195). The leaves of *P. punctata* hardly run down onto the stem. In *P. killarniensis*, the leaves have a sharply curved front margin near the point of insertion. However, depauperate material can be difficult to identify. Any male plants cannot be *P. spinulosa*. The rarer *P. atlantica* (p. 196) is much more western in its distribution and has longer leaves, with broader and coarser teeth, and is not aromatic when crushed.

Habitat

This Atlantic species of western woodland often forms large cushions on rocks, banks and trees. However, it may sometimes occur in sheltered places above the present day tree line on apparently open hillsides. Its core range extends further to the east than our other oceanic *Plagiochila* species.