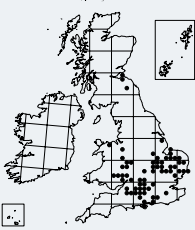


*Platygyrium repens*

Flat-brocade Moss



**Identification** This slender, closely pinnately branched, prostrate, glossy moss is mostly dark green, or sometimes golden. Shoots grow to a length of 1 cm or slightly more. Young plants form neat, regular, prostrate patches that grow tightly appressed to the bark. As the plants grow older, the branches become more erect, and produce branchlets. The leaves are 1–1.5 mm long, and tend to point slightly in one direction. The most distinctive feature of this plant is its deciduous branchlets, produced in clusters from the leaf axils. These are the plants' main method of propagation. Capsules are rare and similar to those of *Pylaisia polyantha* (p. 799), but with a more beaked lid.

**Similar species** Most likely to be overlooked or confused with *Hypnum* species, particularly *H. respinatum* (p. 805). *Platygyrium* is darker, more slender and tightly appressed to the bark, looks scruffier and almost invariably has its unique, tell-tale deciduous branchlets. Very young plants may not have these, and then the leaf shape and microscopic details of the cells in the basal corners of the leaves are necessary to confirm its identity. In shape, the leaves of *P. repens* resemble those of *Homomallium incurvatum* (p. 801), but in *P. repens* the margins are somewhat recurved and the patches of distinct cells in the basal corners of the leaves are more extensive and prominent. *Leucodon sciuroides* (p. 675) also produces deciduous branches, but its long, curved shoots and pleated leaves look very different from those of *P. repens*.

**Habitat** *P. repens* grows on bark, especially in damp woodland, but is also present in orchards, hedgerows, etc., where it may be rather ephemeral. In ideal circumstances it rapidly colonizes trees and becomes locally abundant, spreading by means of its deciduous branchlets. It most often grows on willow (*Salix*) and alder (*Alnus*), but occurs on the living bark of a wide range of trees. Unlike *Pylaisia polyantha*, it will grow low on tree trunks, but is most frequent higher on the main trunk, or on larger, inclined branches. It is not generally found on twigs, and rarely occurs on dead, or rotting wood.

Photo & Text Fred Rumsey