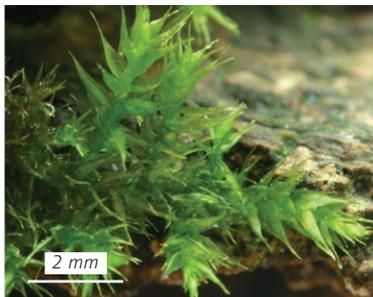


Pylaisia polyantha

Many-flowered Leskea



Identification *P. polyantha* forms slender, creeping, yellowish-green to green, irregularly to pinnately branched, often untidy patches. Shoots are 1–2 cm tall. The leaves are 1–1.5 mm long, erect, often tending to point in one direction when moist, but are appressed when dry. The nerve is very short and double, or absent. Dwarf, fertile branches are abundantly produced. The most distinctive feature of the plant is its copiously produced, 1.5 mm long capsules, two or more generations of which are typically present. In late spring the shoots support clumps of old capsules from one season and very young capsules from a later season. The seta is darkish red, the stiffly erect capsule narrowly elliptical, with a conical lid.

Similar species An uncommon, but perhaps now increasing species, easily overlooked or confused with *Hypnum resupinatum* (p. 805) whose shoots look very similar. The presence of several generations of capsules, with a darker seta bearing an erect capsule with a conical lid distinguishes *Pylaisia*; *H. resupinatum* has capsules with a more beaked lid, often somewhat curved or inclined, and usually with only one generation of capsules present. Under a microscope, the uniformly thickened cells on the outer surface of the capsule of *P. polyantha* act as confirmation. *Platygyrium repens* (p. 800) differs in its gemmiferous branchlets, and very rarely produces capsules.

Habitat *P. polyantha* grows on the bark of several species, most frequently ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*), in hedgerows and open woodland. It avoids the lower part of large tree boles, and most frequently colonizes twigs, horizontal boughs and inclined trunks, especially in the upper 10 cm of regularly trimmed hedges. It was lost from some areas when sulphur dioxide polluted the air and acidified bark, but may now be increasing again. In Scandinavia, *P. polyantha* frequently occurs on poplar (*Populus*) trees.